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A Theatrical Exploration in Healing:

Running Through The Devil's Club, A Women-Centred Drama About Surviving Sexual Abuse and Assault (1994-97)

by

Deborah-Kim Marie Hurford ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Drama

Edmonton, Alberta

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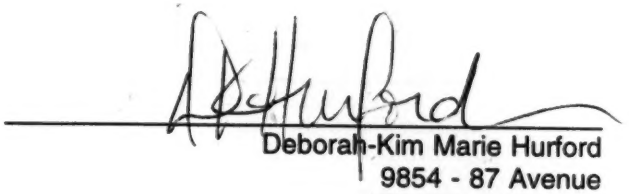

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Abstract

In the spring of 1995 seven women and I toured **Running Through the Devil's Club**, a drama about Surviving Sexual Abuse and Assault, to community halls, school gymnasiums, prison chapels and theatres throughout western Canada. The play and post-performance discussion were presented on seventy-five occasions to approximately seven thousand teens and adults from the Queen Charlotte Islands in British Columbia to the Kingston Prison for Women in Ontario. Travelling by rental van, ferry and aircraft, the women visited remote communities, large urban centres, reserves, conferences, university and high school campuses, as well as federal maximum security penitentiaries which housed known sex offenders. The women were uncovering and sharing the stories of Survivors as a means of stimulating discussion, solidarity, action and hope.

Through a spiralling compilation of journal fragments, interviews, letters, nightmares and scenes from the play, I will share a subjective, three-year retrospective account and analysis of this sacred women-centred theatre process. My findings will reveal the community's impressions of the project, as they comment on the marginalization of women in our culture, and the struggle we face as artists, and as women, to reclaim our power in a violent and dysfunctional society. Part truth, part contradiction, part question, part dream, this account will explore the potential of theatre as a healing force.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express deep appreciation to the many people who have supported and encouraged me throughout this process. Their questions, comments and editorial support have enriched me as much as they have enriched the work, and for that I am truly grateful.

In particular, I would like to thank my Supervisory Committee, David Barnet, Debby Thompson and Reinhild Boehm, as well as my Defense Chair, Rosalind Kerr, and thesis contributors Carole Adilman and Colleen Wheeler, for their unwavering commitment to this project. Their passion and enthusiasm were infectious. I am grateful to Karen Cogan, Jane Heather, Denise Kenney, Eileen Sproule and Heather Swain for jamming with me and directing me to resources. I am also indebted to Beau Coleman, Cpl. Walter Coles, Kathleen Flaherty, Nancy Gitzel, Judith Lawrence, Evelyn Lupul, Kevin Sutley and Keith Turton, who made time in their busy schedules to read drafts of my work and share their impressions with me.

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Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Jack and Paula Hurford, and my sister, Bobbi Blackford, for teaching me compassion, instilling in me a deep yearning to make a difference in my world, and for raising me with the belief that I can accomplish anything.

Dedication

These pages are dedicated to the women and men
who shared their stories at every stage of this process,
and to Survivors everywhere.

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Preface

What Led Up to This Experience?

Spring 1988 Employed as a Community Policing / Victim Services Coordinator with the Sherwood Park Royal Canadian Mounted Police, I obtain approval to develop a collective drama which will explore family violence issues. This crime prevention initiative is to be one component of the Strathcona County Inter-agency Family Violence Awareness Campaign.

November 1988 Under Broken Wings is presented in Sherwood Park, Alberta on five occasions to packed houses. Each performance is followed by a panel forum with actors and local family violence prevention consultants. Response to the play is phenomenal. Seven hundred and fifty audience members engage in critical discussion about the issues, disclose experiences of abuse, admit to assaulting family members, ask for information and assistance, sign up for counselling programmes, and write letters of appreciation to the Detachment. Several of the artists advise me that it is one of the most meaningful theatre experiences they have been involved in. After hearing about the success of the production, several Alberta communities request performances of the play.

January to December 1989 Wings receives a 1989 Alberta Solicitor General Award for "Outstanding Contribution to Crime Prevention". Performance requests continue to pour in; however, the Detachment's mandate does not extend beyond Strathcona County. As a result, they suggest that the artists assume responsibility for the project.

Approximately 3,000 youth and adults experience **Wings** during sporadic mini-tours of the play. During post-performance panel forums, and personal discussions with audience members, it becomes evident that there is a lack of information available regarding the "causes" of violent behaviour and the existence of effective anger management programmes. The need to address "the perpetrator" is identified over and over again. Audience and cast members alike become determined to take action.

January 1990 Wings cast members Paul Austin (actor), Binaifer Kapadia (composer and musician), Brian Marler (actor), and I (facilitator / director) decide to research and develop a play which will focus on the perpetrator within the context of family violence. We also explore the possibility of founding a theatre company.

Summer 1990 Based on our research, we identify a story line and six characters. We decide that the play will follow four men who are forced, either by their partners or the courts, to attend a ten-week anger management programme. The characters and situations in the play are to be based on the Forensic Assessment

and Community Services' Anger Management Programme at Alberta Hospital.

November 1990 In conjunction with the Alberta Family Violence Prevention Campaign, **Maelstrom** is presented to approximately 4,000 teens and adults throughout Alberta, under the direction of Paul Austin. The play is staged for schools, community groups, aboriginal reserves, conferences and retreats. Audience response parallels that of the **Wings** production.

Spring / Summer 1991 **Maelstrom** is nominated for the Elizabeth Sterling Haynes "Outstanding New Play" and "Outstanding Production by a Collective / Independent" Awards. Azimuth Theatre becomes incorporated as a non-profit, charitable society with a mandate to create research-based performance art which examines critical issues and empowers individuals, institutions and communities to initiate positive change.[1] We participate in a visioning process to identify our personal and professional goals, and decide that I will become the Artistic and Executive Director, while maintaining my employment with the R.C.M.P. Paul, Binu and Brian will become founding Board Members, while continuing to pursue other creative opportunities.

November 1991 **Maelstrom** receives a 1990 Canada Solicitor General Award. In addition, the Honourable Pierre Cadeaux presents Azimuth Theatre with a 1990 Canada Solicitor General Special Recognition Award, which is presented to a maximum of four individuals or agencies per year who distinguish themselves nationally in the field of Crime Prevention. We decide to remount and tour **Maelstrom** throughout Alberta in response to numerous performance requests for Family Violence Prevention Month. Approximately 5,000 teens and adults experience the play, and audience response continues to be affirming.

November 1992 Performance requests for **Wings** start to resurface, so Brian, local actor/playwright Sandy Paddick, and I revise the play. It is remounted under my direction, and approximately 5,000 people view the drama in Alberta and the Yukon Territory. This production of **Wings** is nominated for a 1992-93 Elizabeth Sterling Haynes "Outstanding Production for Young Audiences" Award.

August 1993 As a result of a newly-announced federal family violence initiative, the Correctional Service of Canada (C.S.C.) requests six performances of **Maelstrom** for inmates and staff of federal institutions in Bowden, Drumheller and Edmonton, Alberta. Original cast member John Hudson is asked to direct the play, since Paul is unavailable. I produce the project and facilitate the panel discussions. Minor collective changes are made to the script. The three-day tour is intense and challenging, and audience response to the play is extreme. As anticipated, some inmates deflect the issue of male dominance by blaming women

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[1] **Azimuth** n. arc of celestial great circle from zenith to horizon; arc of horizon between north and south point and point where the great circle passing through a heavenly body and the zenith cut the horizon; bearing, way, direction; Arabic origin "assumut" (trans. "the way").

for provoking violence. Interestingly, other inmates are influenced by the drama. They disclose their own stories of abuse, and reveal the heinous crimes they have committed. Despite special introductions for staff performances, C.S.C. employees tend to detach from the issues, and discuss the availability of resources which are targeted to inmates.

September 1993 The Alberta prison tour inspires a pilot, six-month drama programme at the Edmonton Institution, and a two-and-a-half week tour of federal prisons in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

February 1994 **Maelstrom** is performed to 4,000 inmates and staff at federal institutions in western Canada, and audience response parallels that of the Alberta prison tour. In discussions with Nancy Gitzel, the Family Violence Coordinator for the C.S.C. Prairie Region, we determine that a drama about surviving sexual abuse and assault would be useful to women in federal penitentiaries.

March 1994 I facilitate a pilot Family Violence Drama Programme at Edmonton Institution with the assistance of several local artists and family violence specialists. Eleven inmates are guided through the process of creating and performing their own play about family violence issues. Karen Cogan conducts a qualitative study of the process for her Educational Drama Programming in Prison Thesis (University of Alberta, 1995).

April 1994 I decide to develop a show about surviving sexual abuse and assault, which I plan to tour to women's institutions in 1995. A local actor and friend of mine, Sarah Neville, and I title the yet-to-be-developed drama **Running Through the Devil's Club**.

What Do I Think?

"I don't know. I mean, WHAT? What do I think about "WHAT?" SPECIFICALLY?!"

(Pause)

I guess I never really thought about it -- I was busy. I'VE BEEN REALLY BUSY ALL MY LIFE. I've been working and nurturing relationships and fixing my hair and fantasizing about vacationing on a tropical island and decorating my home and following orders and making people like me. I HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO THINK! really."

And she stared at me with her wise-serious-warm-knowing eyes and calmly said, "I want to know what you think."

Deep inhalation of breath. Slow exhalation. There's this sound that accompanies this type of breathing. I think it signals a transition from the Beta state to the Alpha state. Maybe it's just my way of coping when I'm not allowed to smoke... I think, "She really means it."

"okay," I whispered.

And I wandered to my car feeling very unsure of myself...

While working with the R.C.M.P. I learned that eye-witness testimony is the least reliable of all forms of evidence. Part of this journey, for me, has been about finding the courage to figure out what I see-think-feel. These experiences were shared by many, but it is through my sight that we will travel.

So, then, let us begin...

Introduction

In the spring of 1995 seven women and I toured **Running Through the Devil's Club**, a drama about Surviving Sexual Abuse and Assault, to community halls, school gymnasiums, prison chapels and theatres throughout western Canada. The play and post-performance discussion were presented on seventy-five occasions to approximately seven thousand teens and adults from the Queen Charlotte Islands in British Columbia to the Kingston Prison for Women in Ontario. Travelling by rental van, ferry and aircraft, the women visited remote communities, large urban centres, reserves, conferences, university and high school campuses, as well as federal maximum security penitentiaries which housed known sex offenders. The women were uncovering and sharing the stories of Survivors as a means of stimulating discussion, solidarity, action and hope.

Through a spiralling compilation of journal fragments, interviews, letters, nightmares and scenes from the play, I will share a subjective, retrospective account and analysis of this sacred women-centred theatre process. My findings will reveal the community's impressions of the project, as they comment on the marginalization of women in our culture, and the struggle we face as artists, and as women, to reclaim our power in a violent and dysfunctional society. Part truth, part contradiction, part question, part dream, this account will explore the potential of theatre as a healing force.

I will employ the use of several text fonts as a means of representing different "Voices" throughout the piece. In addition to my comments, you will hear from selected audience members and family violence specialists who shared their observations at various stages throughout the project's development. You will also hear the Voices of Carole Adilman and Colleen Wheeler, two of the original collaborators on the project. These two artists represent unique, and often conflicting, perspectives on the process as well as its impact on their lives.

Autobiographies of the Principal Voices That Appear in This Work

Carole Adilman

I was born in Yorkshire, England, and immigrated to Wetaskiwin, Alberta, in 1974 with my husband and four children. After working as a nurse for twenty years, I returned to school at the grand old age of forty-eight to study theatre at Red Deer College, and graduated with honours in 1993. I have been involved in feminist productions of **Spring Time**, a play about lesbian issues by Maria Foref, and **Gertrude and Ophelia**, an adaptation of Shakespeare's **Hamlet** by Margaret Clarke of Calgary, Alberta. Although I found it necessary to leave the project two weeks before the conclusion of the tour, **Running Through The Devil's Club** came at exactly the right

time for me. It had a tremendous effect on my life, spiritually, intellectually and artistically, and strengthened my belief in myself and my abilities. Since **Running**, I have appeared in two episodes of C.B.C.'s **Rough Cutz**, three movies, several television commercials and a number of plays. I am now living in Toronto and just finished working on **Exhibit A** for Discovery TV.

Deborah Hurford

I was born in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and moved to Sherwood Park, Alberta, with my family in 1977, at the age of fourteen. I received my B.Ed. Degree (Drama/English) from the University of Alberta in 1986, and was employed as a part-time Recreation Therapist, teaching visual art and drama, at the Edmonton Youth Development Centre while I attended school. It was there, working with young offenders, that I accidently discovered the potential of theatre as a healing force. In 1986, after teaching on a six-month internship at Uncas School in Strathcona County, I became employed with the Sherwood Park Royal Canadian Mounted Police as a Crime Prevention/Community Relations Officer.[2] For three years, I experimented with popular theatre and developed two Alberta Solicitor General Crime Prevention Award winning dramas for the Detachment: **Echo Mortal**, a show about impaired driving prevention, and **Under Broken Wings**, a drama about family violence awareness. I received extensive family violence training with the R.C.M.P., the Edmonton Police Service, and the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, and eventually became a Co-Chair of the Strathcona County Interagency Committee on Family Violence Awareness. Between 1989 and 1993, I was the Detachment's Community Policing/Victim Services Coordinator, and spearheaded the development of the Victim Assistance Programs in Strathcona County and White Horse, Yukon Territory. I was the only civilian to collaborate on the curriculum development of the **Alberta Solicitor General Pilot Victim Assistance Coordinator's Training Program**, which became a model for Victim Services Units in other provinces.[3] In 1991, I

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[2] Inspector William Drake, former Officer in Charge of Sherwood Park Detachment, and former Strathcona County Reeve, Iris Evans, authorized the creation of this civilian position, which was the only one of it's kind in Canada at the time.

[3] Inspector Ed Henderson, former Officer in Charge of Sherwood Park Detachment, and former Strathcona County Reeve, Iris Evans, authorized the creation of this civilian position which was largely inspired by the work of the Edmonton Police Service. Presently, every R.C.M.P. sub-division in the country now has a Victim Services Unit with teams of trained volunteer professionals who respond to victims of crime and tragedy, in concert with police investigations. Many of the V.S.U. Coordinator positions are now staffed by civilians.

formally co-founded Azimuth Theatre, and have been the Artistic and Executive Director of the Association since its inception. In addition to **Running Through The Devil's Club**, I have facilitated, directed, dramaturged and produced a number of social action dramas which have toured throughout western Canada. I am a recipient of the Canada 125 Medal and the Alberta Premier's Award for Service to Alberta Families and, in 1995, I was nominated for a Y.W.C.A. Tribute to Women of Distinction Award. In September of 1997, I returned to the University of Alberta to pursue a Master of Fine Arts (Directing) Degree on scholarships from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the University of Alberta.

Colleen Wheeler

I was born in Scarborough, Ontario. After moving extensively around the province, our family was transferred to Vancouver when I was eleven, and then to Calgary when I was twelve. After high school, my goal was to become a phys-ed teacher, so off I went to the University of Calgary's Physical Education Program. My first year, I minored in Drama and met my mentor Keith Johnstone. It was he who gave me the push to become an actor. In 1990, I pursued that dream and attended the B.F.A. Acting Program at the University of Alberta. Upon graduating, I moved to Toronto where I worked on a number of student films, and attended the 1993 Toronto film festival. I had a supporting role in **Two Brothers a Girl and a Gun**, which was showcased at the festival. In January of 1994, I moved back to Edmonton and worked on various shorts and industrials, and in the spring of that same year, I auditioned for **Running Through The Devil's Club**. After touring **Running** in 1995, I focused all of my attention on raising money for a five month trip to Europe. I travelled from September 1995 to January 1996, ending up in Ireland. The trip was definitely a turning point in my life. Upon returning to Edmonton, I decided to move to Vancouver and pursue my acting career here, while becoming part of a new community. Since my move in 1996, I have worked with Chemainus Theatre as a lead in two of their productions, **Joytide** and **Steel Magnolias**, and was recently featured on the mini-series **The Titanic**.

For the sake of guiding you through this experience, I have structured the document in three sections. The first chapter, **Becoming One With The Mud**, will describe the sacred women-centred play development, rehearsal and pilot performance process, from April 1994 to January 1995. The second chapter, **The Taste of Blood**, chronicles the three-month touring journey, from February to May 1995. Although analysis is interwoven throughout the piece, the Conclusion, **Sacred Sight**, synthesizes initial, and often fragmented, findings and offers conclusions as well as additional questions about future work of this nature.

Themes will not be addressed exclusively at any one time, but as they relate to, inform, or complicate other issues. This project unearthed so many paradoxes and contradictions for me that it does not feel appropriate to untangle and structure them in a linear, objective fashion. I would prefer to offer them as they came spiralling at me, knowing that I couldn't possibly recreate the journey in its authenticity. But I hope my attempt gives you a sense of the "experience," and somehow causes you to know-act-reflect-heal-change-see in the reading of it.

Chapter One

Becoming One With The Mud

The human heart does not stay away too long from that which hurt it most. There is a return journey to anguish that few of us are released from making.[1]

(The scent of sandalwood incense lingers as you enter the theatre. The stage is dimly lit. A drum set, including bongos, two floor toms and a cymbal, is placed up-stage right; a semi-acoustic electric guitar, rain stick, microphone and stand are placed up centre; and two keyboards up left. Forty six-inch white candles, in small and medium sized earthen flower pots, are placed on the floor in front of the musical equipment and on the sides of the stage, to create a semi-circle which outlines the playing area. Five satin saris/shawls/skirts, each a different shade of purple (dark pink to cobalt blue on one side, and matt black on the other), are neatly placed in front of the candles. Three women enter and take their places behind the instruments. They are wearing different styles of black dance skins and purple saris/shawls/skirts which are draped over their bodies in different configurations. Their faces are smeared with mud.)

> ***March 7, 1995, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan***
> *My eyes are powerful... I look scary. My hair is wild. I look like a Wild Woman... I am ugly and beautiful at the same time.*

(The lights dim to black and a haunting soundscape begins. Five women, in different styles of black dance skins, enter in the darkness and crouch down in a small circle, down stage centre.

Vocalist:	***Someone once told me***
(Speaking)	***That my Guiding Spirit is the Coyote***
	The Howler
	The Trickster
	The Hungry One

As the vocalist speaks in the darkness, one of the women lights a fire stick and slowly raises the flame above the heads of the women. In unison, they light their fire sticks from the original flame.)

> ***May 12, 1995, Edmonton, Alberta***
> *Bertha says something happens when she lights that match. Something*

---

[1] Smith. May 25.

she can't explain. It's like there are Spirits in the flames.

(The women ceremoniously light each of the candles in the semi-circle which surrounds the back and sides of the stage. Their silhouettes become illuminated by candle light, and are slowly enhanced by stage lighting.)

Vocalist:
(Speaking)

Starved for Chaos
Grinding in the jaws of the blackest night
Always running ahead of the pack
Circling back to watch the others from a distance
Hiding behind the branches
Staring
Watching
Until a twig snaps
And everything changes
The Moon exposes you
Melting in its heat
You can't help but bare your teeth
The hunt begins...

(When the Vocalist has finished speaking, all of the candles have been lit. As the Vocalist sings, one of the women dances wildly around the stage with her sari while the other women, each holding a candle, slowly circle around the audience in the form of a procession.)

Vocalist:
(Singing)

Running through the Devil's Club - Darkness
Running through the Devil's Club - Soundless
Running through the Devil's Club
With You...

Swirling, Twirling, Thrashing - Full Moon
Sliding, Slipping, Tearing, Scraping - Panic
Falling down -- Don't Turn Around
Can't look it straight in the Eye
I don't know which way to go...
I don't know which way to go...[2]

(When the song subsides, the women have returned to the stage and are in position for scene one.)

"Hi." I smiled as I opened my office door. "My name's Deborah Hurford and I'll

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[2] Hurford et. al. 5.

be facilitating and directing the show. Come on in and have a seat right over there. Before we get to the actual audition, I'll just explain a bit about Azimuth Theatre and the project so you'll understand why I'm interviewing you as part of the audition. Azimuth is a non-profit, charitable organization committed to the development of research-based performance art which examines critical issues and empowers individuals, institutions and communities to initiate positive change."

Devil's Club: A strongly aromatic shrub which is densely covered in spines and prickles;[3]

"I'm looking for four female actors and two female musicians to research, write and perform a play on the issue of sexual abuse and assault. I just finished touring a play about violent men to maximum security penitentiaries throughout western Canada (**Maelstrom** by Paul Austin[4] and Lorne Cardinal et. al.). In the post-performance panel discussions, it became apparent that a play about sexual abuse and assault would be useful for women in prisons since, according to the Correctional Service of Canada (C.S.C.), the majority of incarcerated women are Survivors of sex crimes.[5] I would like to develop the play over the next two months, and pilot test it at the Edmonton Fringe Festival. Then, sometime next year, I would like to tour it to women's prisons in western Canada".[6]

Three months before the onset of the project, a Metis friend of mine had told me that my Guiding Spirit was the Coyote. We discussed native spirituality a great deal and he introduced me to the concept of nature as a healing force.

"I'm looking for artists of different ages, ethnic origins, and body types, who are from varied backgrounds, to represent a cross section of 'women' in the world of the play. Of course, I'm aware that males are also affected by sexual abuse, but this project will focus specifically on the female experience -- it will be women-centred. I want the artists to come to the project as artists, but also as women. I want them to approach the issue from an intellectual, emotional, physical, sexual and spiritual point of view".

---

[3] Willard. 150-152.

[4] Paul was also a Co-founder of Azimuth Theatre.

[5] The C.S.C.'s **Federally Sentenced Women Profile** states that "80 percent of incarcerated women have histories characterized by sexual and/or physical abuse. Additionally, 37 percent represent ethnic and cultural minorities of which 25 percent are Aboriginal. Federally sentenced women range in age from 19-74 with an average age of 33". See Appendix C for additional information.

[6] Nancy Gitzel, Family Violence Project Coordinator for the Prairie Region (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) of the C.S.C., had approached me about developing the play during the **Maelstrom** tour.

The prickles of the Devil's Club produce a festering wound;[7]

"I've been thinking about doing this piece for a long time. When I worked as a Crime Prevention/Community Relations Officer with the Sherwood Park R.C.M.P., I facilitated a play on suicide with a group of teenagers.[8] During the process, one of the girls in the cast was triggered[9] into remembering her sexual abuse and I tried to help her get into counselling. It turned out that there was a two-month waiting list at the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton because her abuse was not immediate.[10] It was an extremely frustrating time for me and I told myself that one day I would produce a play about sexual abuse. Since that time, I have come to realize that numerous women in my life have been victims of sex crimes. As a result, my conviction to develop a play on the issue has just grown stronger over the years, and the structure and essence of the piece have been percolating in my head".

Two months before the beginning of the rehearsal process, I had a dream about a Wolf. It was trying to attack me, and I was karate kicking it and screaming at it. When the Wolf retreated, I stared it down. Dreams of the Wolf continued throughout the process, and I started believing that perhaps it was trying to teach me lessons about myself.

"I see two 'worlds' in the play: a realistic world in which the characters reveal their stories, and a spiritual world which represents the inner healing journey of Survivors. I would like to integrate dance, movement, and vocal intoning, as well as 'the elements' -- fire, water, air and earth, into the spiritual reality, so I see us using candles, incense, mud, and veils. I would like the artists to be grounded in their own spirituality, and I would like this to be evident both in the process and in the final production".

Devil's Club is used heavily by West Coast Indians for both medicinal and "strong magical powers".[11]

"We will attempt to uncover the stories of Survivors and sit with the pain, the

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[7] Willard. 150-152.

[8] **A Shade of Rain**, 1988.

[9] She was reminded of her abuse, and her feelings of loss, powerlessness, guilt, shame and rage resurfaced.

[10] According to Dr. Reinhild Boehm, Director, Women's Program, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, the waiting list is now a full year. However, Keith Turton of the Sexual Assault Centre states that their staff attempt to see Survivors, who are experiencing immediate crisis, within 48 hours. In 1995, the agency modified its mandate so that the organization now provides crisis intervention rather than long-term therapy.

[11] Willard. 150-152.

despair, the guilt, and the struggle to heal. I want the artists to interpret the stories and transform them into a theatrical experience. The stories will name the truth, but they will be told with dignity and respect. I see the play as an offering. A way of giving the stories back to Survivors as a gift -- as a means of validating their experience".

Vocalist: ***Damen says I am Coyote***
But he can't show me how to howl
And I wonder if the Prairie Wolf
Can find the Trickster
In between the frozen rocks and dirt
Water waves inside
Oh the ocean in my eyes
And the black tipped tail
Of the Prairie Wolf hides[12]

"I have been working in the fields of family violence and popular theatre for the past eleven years, and have come to realize that, like everything else, violence is on a continuum. We are all situated on that continuum both as victims and as perpetrators. Clearly it's more complicated than that, but I can see that men are hurting as well -- obviously, for very different reasons than women. Our society, as a whole, needs to do some serious healing. I don't want this to be a man-bashing play. And I don't think it's really useful to present a lot of depressing stories that say 'ain't it awful,' and just leave it at that. Survivors are strong and resilient people. They have managed to endure these horrific experiences and they still get out of bed most days. Survivors need to 'see' that. The play must celebrate their strength and their ability to heal. The play must give us all a sense of hope".

Image/ A Pair of Broken High Heels Lying in the Middle of a Dirt Road

February 28, 1995, Vancouver, British Columbia
...It's been so crazy, painful, tense. I'm trying to connect with the reasons I am doing this tour -- and the reasons I do this work. Sometimes I can't remember... I am shedding layers and layers of skin... trying to discover who I am, what I need and want. I'm not sure what will result at this moment.

"This project will be very difficult. I'm sure there will be times when you'll feel sad or depressed or angry or overwhelmed. So I need to know that you have a support system in place. People to talk to, healthy ways of dealing with stress.

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[12] Hurford, et. al. 12.

I don't need to know if you have experienced sexual abuse or assault but, if the process works as it should, you will probably be triggered into remembering issues of loss in your life, and you will have to deal with them during the process. If you are a Survivor, I need to know that you have processed your issues enough that you can focus on the task of creating and performing the play. Of course, the cast will be a source of support, and I can certainly refer you to appropriate resources if the need arises. A number of sexual abuse and assault specialists will be consulting with us on the project. So, do you have any questions before I ask you to present your monologue?"

The act of making art exposes a society to itself. Art brings things to light. It illuminates us. It sheds light on our lingering darkness. It casts a beam into the heart of our own darkness and says, "See?"[13]

During the auditions, I attempted to ensure that the artists understood that I was more interested in their willingness to explore the issues in an honest and collaborative manner than I was about their previous theatre experience. I wanted to work with artists who were going to commit to the project on a deeply personal level. Once I started talking about the project, the women immediately opened up and shared their personal thoughts about sexual abuse and assault. I got an immediate "gut feeling" about each of the women within a few minutes. Clearly some of the candidates were not truly engaged with the issue. Some were frightened of exploring the theme, and one was quick to tell me that she was opposed to presenting "graphic" material. I assured her that there would be no nudity in the play and that my intention was not to exploit or objectify women. Others immediately started telling stories about women in their lives who had been raped or abused. Some of the women shared their own experiences with me. I remember feeling somewhat surprised by their openness since I had not asked any of them to share. In retrospect, I realize that I had simply given these women permission to talk. Permission which is usually denied in our culture.

Making a piece of art may feel a lot like telling a family secret. Secret telling, by its very nature, involves shame and fear.[14]

Throughout the first round of auditions, I made a personal connection with nearly all of the women. Their monologues and songs were the most grounded I had seen in any series of auditions over the past eleven years of my involvement in theatre. It was a moving experience for me, and I found myself hugging most of the women before they left my office. We had shared our mutual concerns about an issue which had ultimately affected us all.

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[13] Cameron. 67.

[14] Cameron. 67.

Frequently as children, we have experiences that we simply aren't strong enough to handle without a lot of support and help, and often that support is absent. So we push them down and we wait. This gives us the chance to work through these old anguishes when we have what we need for this task.[15]

Casting this project was extremely difficult. I wanted to represent a cross section of "women" in the play, but each time I selected a possible combination of performers I eliminated a critical representation of age, ethnic origin, body type or theatrical skill. After several sleepless nights, I modified the project budget and selected five women to collaborate on the piece. As originally planned, a female percussionist and a female composer/pianist were also selected to collaborate with me on the development of the music/sound. There would be eight of us.

I wrote the theme song for the show one night after we went running in a field by Mill Creek Pool in June of 1994. I remember feeling so grounded and connected to everything after our first mud ritual. I walked around my apartment for hours, leaving a trail of crumbled dirt everywhere I went. But I didn't care about the mess. I looked at myself in the mirror for a long time when I got home. It was as if I could see myself separate from me, but not, you know? Then I went straight to my guitar. The song started to emanate out of me with such force. Like it was coming from somewhere outside of me and moving through me. Like I had nothing, and everything, to do with it. That song was definitely the best thing I had ever written up to that point in my life, yet it had taken the least amount of conscious energy to create. Hours later, when I was washing the mud off in a warm bath, I realized that the experience had moved me through a critical doorway as an artist.

Image/ A Woman Examining Her Naked Body in the Mirror

We went down to the river with a bucket of water and some towels, and we just started smearing mud all over ourselves and each other. When we were all covered in mud, we started running through the field in our bare feet. Faster and faster. Swishing our skirts in the air. Laughing and jumping. Feeling the dirt in between our toes. Without our knowing, a group of teenage boys had gathered to watch us from the top of the bank. They started yelling, "Run you bitches! Run!" When we stopped and looked up at them, they took off on their bikes.

Carole Adilman was a stunning, fifty-year-old woman with shiny red, shoulder-length hair, and a strong British accent which commanded attention. She had been a nurse for twenty years, and had recently graduated from the Theatre Program at Red Deer College. Carole was articulate, wise and physically fit. She would create the character of Mercedes Ryberg.

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[15] Smith. May 25.

Sign/ A Mature Rich Woman in a Designer Skirt Suit[16]

It was difficult to ground the process in spirituality when most of us were still trying to define our own sense of it. After several discussions, we discovered that only one of the cast members appeared to be anchored in an organized religion, and the rest of us seemed to be disconnected or searching for something else.

> ***August 9, 1995, Lake Makamun, Alberta***
> *The Catholic God doesn't meet my needs. I'm not sure that he ever has. Trying to figure out what the Divine Goddess is about. Apparently she is in me. My mom swears she would have been burned with the Witches if she would have been born during the Hunts... I realize that I don't need an altar to connect with my spirituality. I feel a connection to nature, and a power greater than me, but I feel disconnected from my culture/heritage/origin. There are few traditions except Roman Catholic rituals in my family. I need to invent new rituals that meet my needs. I wish my dad and I wouldn't debate/argue about Catholicism. We both believe in much of the philosophy and teachings, but I am not able to communicate to him how I think the Church oppresses women, and that when he supports it, he betrays women/me. We are both struggling to find our truths... I think my spirituality includes my connection to things greater than me -- a greater power, nature, cultural origin/societal community and my inner spirit/soul/truth.*

Nature as a healing force seemed to unite us spiritually as a group of women. I think we all bastardized/transformed rituals from our own "reference points," while we collected and imagined rituals which we thought might assist us in our process. Our rituals involved smoke (Spirits), mud (earth, water, nature), breath (body, spirit, soul, truth), circles (community), and fire (knowledge, reflection, illumination).[17]

Althea Cunningham was an eighteen-year-old African Canadian woman with a funky, flat top hair style. She had just graduated from a performing arts high school, and although she had very little theatrical training, Althea was extremely excited about working on the project. I was mesmerized by Althea's expressive face and ability to animate a story. She also had an incredible singing voice. Althea would create the character of Roberta Walker.

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[16] "Sign/" represents what I perceive to be seen through the male gaze.

[17] See Women's Rituals by Barbara G. Walker, The Women's Comfort Book by Jennifer Louden, and A Women's Guide to Spiritual Renewal by Nelly Kaufer and Carol Osmer-Newhouse.

Sign/ A Young, Barefoot Black Woman in a Tank Top and Cut Offs

We always had scented pillar candles and sandalwood incense in the rehearsal room. At the beginning of rehearsal, we would each light our own candle and sit in a circle on the floor. Sometimes we would smudge[18] or vocally intone. Often we would talk about our personal struggles or the connections we were making in our own lives as a result of coming to understand the characters. Sometimes we would hold hands with each other, close our eyes and just sit with our silence. When I go into that rehearsal room now, I can still smell the candles and incense. There is an energy in that room. The presence of those women and our struggle. Now I light candles and incense when I'm having a bad day. It grounds me.

Tina Lameman was an attractive, petite, twenty-four-year-old Cree woman from Beaver Lake First Nations Reserve near Lac La Biche, Alberta. She had long black curly hair and was soft-spoken yet direct. Tina had partially completed her theatre training at Grant MacEwan Community College, and she had some experience in film. She was unable to tour because she had a small child, so Tina was replaced by Bertha Twin in 1995.

Sign/ A Make-up Painted Native Woman in a Mini Skirt

Bertha Twin was an attractive thirty-eight-year-old Cree woman with long black hair. She was studying drama at the University of Alberta, and was a contract counsellor at Nechi Institute and Pound Makers Lodge. Bertha was also soft-spoken yet direct, and emanated a sense of quiet wisdom. She was very involved in Cree spirituality and had some experience in theatre, as well as counselling Survivors in the native community. Tina and Bertha would create the character of Tanis Thunderchild.

Sign/ A Mature Native Woman Dancing in Traditional Dress

All of the actors smeared mud on their faces, arms, hands and feet during the play. "Becoming one with the mud" represented something very different to each woman. For some, it symbolized how "dirty", "marked" or "stained" Survivors often feel; for others it represented the mask of denial worn by Survivors who choose to deny their abuse and its impact on their lives; others saw playing in the mud as a means of reclaiming the lost childhood which was stolen from them, or a way of cleansing oneself with Mother Earth. Playing in the mud was a wonderful, freeing experience. It had a profound impact on us, as well as anyone who viewed us.

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[18] "As it is practiced today in women's circles, smudging means passing around a small vessel of smoking incense or fragrant herbs, so that each participant may cense herself. She may draw the smoke over her head, or pass her hands through it, or pass the vessel around her body, or breathe in the scent, or all of these. The burning material may be commercial incense or home-grown herbs, dried and ignited." Walker. 31.

Natalie Czar was a twenty-one-year-old graduate of the Grant MacEwan Community College Performing Arts Program. She was of Ukrainian descent, with long blonde hair, a strong dance background and the figure of a model. Natalie would create the character of Alison Kerychuck.

Sign/ A Sexy Blonde Centrefold Seducing the Camera

About four o'clock one Sunday afternoon in July of 1994, the eight of us drove out to Brian Marler's[19] *acreage by Ardrossan, so we could have a bonfire. We had asked Michael Spencer-Davis*[20] *to take some picture of the process, so he followed us out in his car. Since Colleen had been to the acreage before, she directed me to the fire pit, which was in the middle of a crevice in the fields. We jumped out of the van, smeared mud on ourselves and ran through the fields in our bare feet. Michael followed us around, snapping pictures at will. When everyone was exhausted, we said goodbye to Michael, gathered up some wood and made a fire. The group of us eight women sat in front of the fire and talked about the character journeys and the connections we were making in our own lives. It was dusk when I started playing a song on the guitar I had been working on for the play. Out of nowhere, a pack of coyotes started howling. We all froze. They couldn't have been more than thirty feet away -- just on the other side of the crevice. I slowly turned my head in the direction of the howling, and then my eyes darted to Carole and Bertha because they were the older women in the group. Bertha smiled at me and motioned for me to keep playing. I took a deep breath and started wailing.*

I want to Scream
Like the Screeching Eagle
Dive and swoop
Brush the Earth
And soar through the Skies
Past the Light
Past the Light[21]

The coyotes howled insanely as I sang, and everyone else sat there in silence. When the song ended, the howling slowly trailed off. It was an incredible experience, and no one spoke for quite some time. When the fire died out, we collected the dirt and ashes from the fire pit, and placed it in a blue ice cream bucket. We wore this mud in our rehearsals and performances until it turned rancid in March of 1995.

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[19] Now based in Toronto, Brian was a local actor, Co-founder of Azimuth Theatre and friend to some of the cast members.

[20] Michael is a local actor who also dabbled in photography.

[21] Hurford et. al. 39.

Colleen Wheeler was a very tall, large-boned, "Irish looking" Caucasian woman with a mass of thick, long red curly hair. At twenty-seven, she was a graduate of the University of Alberta B.F.A. (Acting) program, and had a great deal of theatre and film experience. Colleen had collaborated on new works before, and was the most trained and experienced cast member. She would create the character of Brenda O'Donnel, and assistant direct during both rehearsal processes.

Sign/ A Healthy Irish Farm Woman in a Flowered Dress

One full moon in August of 1994, we decided to have a talking circle at midnight, down by the river in front of Saskatchewan Drive. A female artist, who had been consulting with us on the project, heard about our plans and asked if she could join us. We smeared mud on our bodies, lit candles and walked down the river bank in a scattered procession. A police officer stopped on the Drive, jumped out of his car and asked us what was going on. After Colleen explained what we were doing, he shook his head, chuckled and said, "You girls be careful down there," and drove off. When we found a clearing which was surrounded by trees, we set our candles in front of us in the circle. One by one, we began reflecting on the process. Out of nowhere, our guest started telling us how she had been a victim of incest for most of her childhood. I couldn't believe it. I had had no idea. She choked back tears the whole time she recounted her experiences while the rest of us let the tears roll down our cheeks. I remember someone, Carole, I think, hugging her and saying, "It's alright, you don't have to go on," and she said, "No, I want to." She said she wanted to thank us for having the courage to do the project, and telling us her story was the only way she knew how to express her gratitude, and let us know how important the piece was to her. I used to bump into her all the time at theatre events after that night, but we never spoke about her disclosure. I could see in her eyes how important it was to her that it remain private, and I tried to reassure her with my eyes. Only since those chance meetings have I come to realize just how vulnerable she was with all of us.

Shauna Hosegood was a petite, twenty-year-old Caucasian drummer who played with a local band called "Pal Joey". She had extremely short, sandy blonde hair and a thick "armband" tattoo on her right bicep. She would design the percussion for the show, and play the bongos, floor drums and cymbal during the 1994 performances. Shauna was unable to tour with us in 1995 because Pal Joey was recording a compact disc, so Michelle Tollentino replaced her.

Sign/ A Tough White Chick on a Motor Bike

Michelle Tollentino was a shy, innocent-looking, twenty-five-year-old Filippina woman who had graduated from the Grant MacEwan Community College Music Program. She had black, shoulder-length hair and was very petite. Michelle would play percussion during the 1995 performances.

Sign/ A Philippine Bride Doll on a Wedding Cake

I felt beautiful when I had mud smeared all over my face. There was something about it that made me feel grounded and strong and powerful. I remember walking through Safeway one day with mud on my face because I didn't have time to wash it off after the show, and we had another show that day anyway. Everyone stayed clear of me. They looked at me like I was crazy. I remember feeling free. Powerful. Like I was in control of who I was. People were confused. They couldn't judge my appearance, you know? They couldn't objectify me. Classify me.

Binaifer Kapadia was a thirty-one-year old East Indian/Persian woman who graduated from the University of Alberta's Music Program. She had short, black hair and a slim build. Binu was an accomplished musician as well as a Co-founder of Azimuth Theatre, and we had collaborated on several projects before. She would co-compose music/sound with me, and play the keyboards during the performances.

Sign/ A Persian Woman Dancing Alone With Candles in Her Living Room

Colleen: The mud was a conundrum to me for a while 'cause I was thinking, "What the fuck are we doing? Why are we putting mud on our faces?" You know? There was a whole collage of feelings I had about the mud. And I was apprehensive because I wasn't sure what the mud meant to me. But looking at the pictures that were taken when we were all in mud, I've never seen that look in my eyes before. It's a pretty powerful look. You don't really see powerful pictures of yourself, you know? I must have been feeling powerful, because those pictures are power. They're beautiful, and there was mud all over my face.

I was a thirty-one-year-old Caucasian woman with shoulder length, dark brown hair and a slim build. I had graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Education Degree, and was pursuing my Master of Arts Degree in Theatre on a part-time basis. I would facilitate and direct the piece, co-compose the music/sound, and write the lyrics for the songs/voice-overs. During the performances, I played the guitar and rain stick, and was the vocalist. I also facilitated the post-performance discussions.

Image/ A Wolf Ripping a Woman's Throat Open With Its Teeth

Colleen: Having that incest Survivor come into our rehearsal process and talk to us about bestiality blew my mind. About how, to this day, she has to fight from having sex with her dog, even though she says she knows it's wrong. And all the sexual shit she has to work out with

her husband. Jesus Christ. The all-entangling web that emanates from somebody that's been abused. How many aspects of their life are affected by that? Everything. Their love life, their sense of what sex is. I mean their whole sense of what sex is, is warped. Seeing what appeared to be a healthy young woman having such pain in her head. Like not being able to focus. I guess I just learned that the implications of sexual abuse go much further than I thought. And again, realizing how many people it has happened to. I think everybody I know has probably had an experience of abuse or assault in some sense.

The script-writing process began with a two-week in-service on sexual abuse and assault. A number of family violence specialists and Survivors came to speak to the cast, and we watched videos, took notes, and waded through stacks of reading material.[22] Several themes evolved, and were placed on a white board. Eventually, each woman claimed these themes and character traits through a slow process of elimination. With the assistance of the group, each woman built a character around her selected themes, while mixing and matching stories which had been shared with us by numerous Survivors.

Carole: I have developed closer relationships with women since **Running**. I think because I see the power and resilience of women that I didn't see before. There are so many strong, independent women out there that can only be admired for their strength of character, and persistence in overcoming abuse and life in general.

Image/ A Group of Women Holding a Woman While She Cries

Some of the women in the cast were Survivors. Slowly during the rehearsal process, they began disclosing experiences, as they were triggered by the research and discussions with other Survivors. We discussed personal boundaries at great length because I did not hire the women to present their own stories on stage. I felt like it would be asking them to prostitute their personal experiences, and I didn't want to be a pimp. Despite my reference to this metaphor, some of the women were still interested in presenting aspects of their stories in the play. Conversely, some of the artists, who were also Survivors, were adamant that they wanted to be perceived by audience members as artists -- not Survivors. I knew it was imperative that we made clear distinctions between our own experiences and those of the characters we were creating. I felt that this was important for our mental heath and personal safety. I wanted the artists to channel their passion and empathy for the issues into a fictional character which was based on a compilation of true stories. In the end we compromised, and segments of some cast members' real

[22] See Appendix D for a complete list of the consultants.

stories were integrated into the piece, largely because these women were so connected to them. I think this added to the authenticity and sacredness of the play, and it created a profound sense of respect amongst the women, and for other Survivors.

Shame is a controlling device. Shaming someone is an attempt to prevent the person from behaving in a way that embarrasses us.[23]

We brainstormed possible journey skeletons for each character, and then the women would go away and write scenes individually, or with the assistance of Colleen or me. Often women would pair up and audio tape improvisations of scenes if they were having difficulty writing. Eventually, the scenes would be shared with the whole group for feedback and dramaturgical support. It was an excruciatingly slow and difficult writing process, but it ultimately captured the honesty and cohesiveness necessary to ensure the integrity of the piece.

Image/ A Child Exploring Her Vagina

Carole: The word cunt has been associated with violence. The word comes from the Oriental Great Goddess Cunti (or Kunti) the Yoni of the universe. Cunt is not slang dialect or any marginal form, but a true language word of the oldest stock. In ancient writings, "cunt" was synonymous with "woman". It was medieval clergy who perceived it as an obscenity in female genital shrines of the pagans: holy caves, wells, groves. Any such place was called cunnus diabolic (Devilish Cunt). Witches were known to worship at these places and we all know the rest of that.[24]

Character/Mercedes Ryberg: Abused by her step-brother starting at age six and continuing until age fourteen, fifty-one-year-old Mercedes currently works as a crown prosecutor. She has two grown children and is in a heterosexual relationship. While prosecuting a child sexual abuse case, which mirrors her own experience, she is triggered to examine her own abuse in Britain, and confront her family in an attempt to abdicate personal responsibility for her abuse.

Image/ A Man With Tears in His Eyes

I know from my family violence training with the R.C.M.P., Edmonton Police Service and the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton that sexual abuse and assault is about power and control. The perpetrator is not seeking sexual satisfaction, although that may result during the act. The perpetrator is overpowering, controlling, manipulating, humiliating

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[23] Cameron. 67.

[24] Carole's primary source for this knowledge is: Walker. The Women's Encyclopedia... 197-198.

and degrading the victim. Sex is equated with power. It is commonly agreed, among therapists who work with sex offenders, that empathy training is a vital step in the rehabilitation of sex offenders. If they cannot recognize that their victims are thinking, breathing human beings, rather than objects, sex offenders can easily deny the impact of their crimes and rationalize justifications for them. A sense of empathy assists sex offenders to understand the impact of their crimes on others, as well as identify the relationship between sex and power.[25]

Character/Roberta Walker: The daughter of Jamaican immigrants, Roberta was molested as a child by her alcoholic mother. Consequently, seventeen-year-old Roberta has lived in group homes since the age of eight. When her mother betrays her once again, Roberta is forced to examine her childhood sexual abuse and let go of unhealthy relationships and influences in her life.

We were very conscious of the fact that Althea was African Canadian and the character she was creating was from a low socioeconomic background. We discussed her character's history at great length because I was concerned that we would be reinforcing the stereotypes of women of colour by representing a stereotypical scenario. Althea felt very strongly about the character journey she was creating because it was based on true stories. We ultimately agreed that the character reflected the experience of many black Canadian women, and we were prepared to defend this choice in post-performance discussions.

Character/Tanis Thunderchild: Abused as a child by a male babysitter while living on a Woodland Cree Reserve, thirty-five-year-old Tanis currently works as a lounge waitress in an urban centre, and dates a number of men. A sexual encounter causes her to examine her childhood abuse and rediscover her Cree spirituality on her journey toward healing.

On many occasions throughout the process, the lines between nature as a healing force and native spirituality intersected, and we struggled to acknowledge the distinctions. The Traditional Ways of the native people were never demonstrated on stage, although they were intimated in Tanis' healing journey. Many native audience members commented that they were appreciative that the character was practising the Traditional Ways, and some in British Columbia suggested that they should be demonstrated in the play. We chose not to stage them because they are sacred, and we didn't want to be perceived as exploiting them, despite the fact that we believed that ***Running Through the Devil's Club*** *was also sacred. Since I am still defining nature as a healing force, for myself, I am not sure at this point if we appropriated native spirituality in our process.*

"Smudging is the delineation of a sacred space by some kind of sweet-smelling smoke. Native

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[25] For more information on these themes, contact Tom Gorman, Interpersonal and Family Skills (Family Violence Program for Parolees), Edmonton.

Americans used tobacco... Old Testament priests cooked meat on their altars, for a 'sweet savor' and 'an offering made by fire unto the Lord' (Exod. 29:25), believing along with their pagan contemporaries that gods were attracted by the odors of roasting flesh and actually lived on the airy essence that rose into the air with the smoke." (Walker. 31.)

Certainly Tina and Bertha guided us through specific native rituals, but they always sought permission from Elders prior to doing so, and they were also very conscious of protocol. As a cast, we discussed cultural appropriation a great deal. How is the smoke from Sweetgrass or Sage different from the incense used in the Roman Catholic Church or in Asian spirituality, for example? One of the obvious differences in the rituals is that the Priest and Altar Boys handle the incense in the Catholic Church whereas the people handle the Sweetgrass/Sage/Incense in the other two cultures. When does creating smoke become an appropriation? Is it about the steps you take to create it, and who has the authority to handle the object to be burned?

"It was also a universal custom to attract the attention of deities with other sweet smells: perfumes, incense, burning spices. Burnt essences of all kinds were used throughout the Middle Ages to cover the less attractive smells of unwashed bodies and of careless housekeeping in churches. Thus it has long been believed that sweet-smelling smoke 'purifies' the space. This is the principle that underlies smudging." (Walker. 31.)

I will always remember my discussions with Elders, like Arnold Ritchie from Sardis, British Columbia, who was at Mountain Institution on the ***Maelstrom*** *tour. He talked about rituals transcending colour. Meaning that rituals were about bringing people together. To celebrate, heal, teach and grow, as well as maintain "a way of life." If people's intentions were to heal others, how could they be excluded from a ritual celebration because of their race? Arnold expressed a sense of pride in knowing that the native peoples have the potential to be world leaders in the area of healing. They have the potential to "teach" whites and other cultures who are ready to learn. I have participated in numerous native rituals at prisons and reserves throughout western Canada and recognize that this sentiment is not shared by all Elders. So it's something I think about a lot. In fact, a group of native men gave me a beaded necklace at the conclusion of the first inmate drama project I facilitated at Edmonton Institution in 1994, and I have only worn it twice. I talked to my Cree friend, Lorne Cardinal*[26] *about it, and said that I feel insecure about wearing it. Like I'm afraid people will think I'm trying to be native. He was shocked. He said, "No, it's a badge of Honour. You should wear it whenever you want."*

Character/Alison Kerychuck: Seventeen-year-old Alison is an honour student at St. Mary's High school. An unexpected pregnancy causes her to reveal her incestuous relationship with her father. Her ensuing journey is a painful struggle

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[26] Lorne is a local actor and, in 1993, he became the first native man to graduate from the University of Alberta's B.F.A. (Acting) Programme.

to gain the acknowledgement and support of her family.

Image/ An Inmate Lifting Up His Muscle Shirt to Exhibit His Nipple Ring and Tattoos

We were bombarded with performance requests from prisons throughout western Canada -- many of them housed males, and many of these men were known sex offenders. After much discussion amongst the cast members and representatives of the prisons, we decided to perform the play in male institutions, as a form of empathy training. Our biggest concern was the possibility of being (re)victimized by the men.

Colleen: With my body size, and my voice and my power, I've always been a threat to men around me. I've grown up with being called "You fucking whore. You bitch" by young men when I asserted any kind of power. I don't think men have ever had a respect for women. There's a lot of good men, but as far as I'm concerned, my experiences with a lot of them have been that they're threatened. And they feel that they have to say something to quelch that feeling of being threatened. As I disclosed during the process, I would walk down the street when I was thirteen or fourteen years old and men would come up to me and grab my breasts. It changed my thinking. Deb and I had a similar experience last night when we went out for dinner to the Keg. In the parking lot, a drunk twenty-year-old guy said he'd eat us out even though we were fat fucking whores. That doesn't surprise me. And I don't get hurt by that any more. I mean, sure, if a friend of mine said that to me I'd be hurt, but it was just a bunch of young kids. And I'm not saying I like it, but it's a fact of life that I've dealt with. I just try to reclaim my power as a woman and not get sucked into being hurt by that kind of stuff.

Character/Brenda O'Donnel: A victim of gang rape when she was eighteen, twenty-nine-year-old Brenda currently works as a medical lab technician. When her co-worker decides to deal with her historical rape, Brenda's memories of her own sexual assault surface. After a long period of denial, Brenda explores her options in the criminal justice system on her journey toward self-empowerment.

Image/ A Woman Mutilating Her Arm With a Disposable Razor Blade

I know from my victim assistance training that Survivors of sex crimes often attempt suicide. Most of them don't actually want to end their lives. It's a cry for help. By making reference to self-mutilation in the play, we hoped to normalize those Survivors' feelings of severe rage turned inward. But whenever you address the issue of suicide with people who have considered it, you run the risk of triggering them to carry out an attempt. So you need to ensure that support systems are in place. But even then, there

are no guarantees.[27]

Once each character's individual journey was complete, we cut and spliced the scenes together in the form of five one-woman shows unfolding side by side. The script was structured in such a way that the stories were always going back and forth between the women in a seemingly unstructured manner. When one woman was speaking, the others would freeze while remaining "in character". As a result, the stories managed to comment on each other despite the fact that the characters were operating in separate realities. In each series of scenes, the journeys had a common thread, such as the character's typical day at work, or the event which triggered memories of her abuse/assault.

Mercedes: ***He applies the milking machines to the first two cows... I take my place in the empty stall and lay down as he unbuttons his trousers.***[29]

Whispering Voices:[28]

Incy wincy spider climbing up the spout Down came the rain and wash the spider out Out came the sun and dried up all the rain and incy wincy spider climbed up the spout again.

Alison: ***He always comes into my room in the middle of the night. He whispers to me but I don't hear him. I just lose myself in the wallpaper.***[30]

Mercedes: ***I feel my body tense as the cold fingers creep up and down my legs, and pry into my opening. "Relax, calm down, open your legs wider."***[31]

Alison: ***Sometimes he would bring me Smarties or gum. Now he just gives me***

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[27] For more information on this issue, contact Keith Turton, Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre.

[28] The whispering voices begin as Mercedes says,"unbuttons his trousers".

[29] Many Survivors of long-term abuse are forced to participate in a ritualized form of assault. They are familiar with the routine and simply play their role without question. For additional information on footnotes numbered 24 to 37, contact Evelyn Lupul, therapist, or Keith Turton, Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre, or refer to Abuse In Families: A Community Awareness Kit or the Victim Advocate Resources listed in my bibliography.

[30] A form of dissociation, where the Survivor emotionally leaves her body during the abuse in order to cope with the experience.

[31] An authoritarian voice and mannerism can coerce and intimidate the Survivor into going along with the assault even though they don't want it to happen.

money.[32]

Voices:

Tanis: ***I wonder who's out there. How could people laugh so long? Somebody is talking in Cree. He just called her a Choosis, must be his wife to call her a cunt.*** *(Laughing)* *(Giggling)*

Carole: By Victorian times, scholars were embarrassed by the word as they had long forgotten its earliest meaning, and from then on it has deteriorated. It is a sacred word for a sacred place. Kin is another form of cunt, and meant not only matriarchal blood relation, but also cleft or crevice, the Goddess' genital opening. A Saharan Tribe called Kuntahs traced their descent from this holy place. Indian "Kundas" were their mother's natural children, begotten out of wedlock as gifts of the Goddess Kunta.

Tanis: ***Choosis, choosis, choosis. Everything's swearing all the time. I can hear somebody getting sick.*** *(Silence)*

Mercedes: ***He's playing with my opening and I feel funny in my tummy.***[33] ***He laughs, and takes his fingers out of me and brings them up to my face. "See, they're wet; that means you want me."***[34]

Alison: ***But I did.***[35] ***I tried to say no. Mom, do you remember when Shadow***

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[32] Many perpetrators of sexual abuse lure and manipulate Survivors with things they know the Survivor desires. The Survivors can then be "guilted" into the sex crime because they are told, or they feel, that they owe the perpetrator something in return.

[33] This is the child's internal and instinctive "No" response to the assault.

[34] Many Survivors' bodies respond to sexual manipulation during the assault, despite the fact that their minds are not "willing" the response. This confuses the Survivors and increases their feelings of guilt and shame. The Survivor's body response validates the perpetrator's rationalization that the Survivor actually "wanted" the abuse to occur, as well as their rationalized belief that they have not actually perpetrated a sex crime.

[35] This line/"response" attempts to embody the contradiction that some young Survivors actually "want" the abuse to continue because they think it is a form of power (over other family members, but particularly the mother. The child often has a deep sense of rage toward her mother for "allowing" the abuse to happen in the first place). The Survivor rationalizes that she is her father's "chosen" girl/woman. Being inappropriately sexualized like this teaches some girls to use sex as a means of manipulating men, but particularly the

ran away?

Mercedes: *I feel the weight of his body over me. He props his upper body on his elbows so I don't get all his weight.*[36] *His thing is long and hard and pushes against my opening. "No, no, it hurts." He pulls away from me. I open my eyes just a little, and see him spit into his hand and rub it on his thing. He holds me down and thrusts his thing inside me...(screams and sobs, then starts to sing quietly to herself)*[37]

Mercedes:

Ride a cock horse
To Banbury Cross
To see a fine lady
Upon a white horse

Alison:

He said it was all my fault,[38] *but if I was a good girl for daddy, he would get me a new dog.*[39]

With rings on her fingers
And bells on her toes
She shall have music
Wherever she goes

Tanis: *I hear someone opening a beer; I can hear it fizzing. Somebody's choking. They're going to be sick tomorrow.*[40] *Oh my God. Sounds like Jonah's voice. How long has he been here? Somebody's chair is scraping. Somebody's getting up. Where are they going? Don't leave*

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perpetrator, to get what they want/need. They soon realize that their bodies are a form of currency. For other girls, they perceive their sexuality to be completely undesirable and they choose to deny it altogether.

[36] Perpetrators recognize that they cannot leave any visible marks or injuries on the child or they will be found out.

[37] Another form of dissociation.

[38] Because the Survivors already feel ashamed, guilty and responsible for the abuse, they ultimately integrate this myth into the very essence of their identity, and it is engrained even deeper if an adult or someone in a position of validates this falsehood.

[39] Many perpetrators blackmail their victims and threaten to hurt or kill their loved ones if they do not consent to the crime and promise to keep it a secret.

[40] Alcohol lowers people's inhibitions but it never "causes" individuals to commit sexual abuse or other crimes. However, alcohol and other drugs have been successfully used as a defense in sex crimes cases in the Canadian Criminal Justice System. Contact Cpl. Walter Coles at the Lethbridge R.C.M.P. Detachment for more information on this issue.

me with Jonah. I don't want him to babysit.[41]

Mercedes: ***I open my eyes, beads of sweat have formed on his forehead. His mouth is open, and he grunts between breaths. Faster, faster he thrusts inside me, and then one long last groan. He pulls away and I feel something warm trickling from my opening and down my legs.***

Alison: ***He said: "See what happens when you're not nice to daddy? God is punishing you by sending Shadow away."***[42]

Tanis: ***My eyes are squeezed shut. Go away, please. I'm sleeping. Can't you see I'm sleeping? Leave me alone. Don't touch me. Oh you stink. You are so gross. Belt buckle's coming off. I can hear a zipper. Oh no. Please, please, leave me alone. I don't want to talk to you. I don't want to look at you. I don't want to put it in my mouth. Where's my dad? Where's my dad? Where are you guys?***

Alison: ***"It will be our little secret."***

Mercedes: ***He stands up and throws his handkerchief to me. "Here, wipe yourself off." I carefully wipe the white slime from my body. It feels sticky and I feel sick. "Hey come on, these next two cows need their tits washing; stop mucking about." I quickly put on my clothes, pick up my pail and methodically begin to wash the smooth, soft flesh.***

Alison: ***I never said no again.***[43]

I have never cried so much in my life. Sometimes I thought I would literally crumble to the floor, sobbing, if I heard one more person tell me a heart-wrenching story about how they had been violated, or how they had raped and murdered someone. Funny, but this sense of calm and strength would just wash over me every time someone started

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[41] The majority of children who are sexually abused know their perpetrator quite well, and the perpetrator usually establishes a level of trust before the abuse begins. This makes it harder for the child to distinguish between right and wrong, since they know and trust the perpetrator yet they have an internal "no" response to the abuse.

[42] Perpetrators often manipulate children they are abusing by using/distorting their spirituality/religion, cultural customs, and beliefs. They inappropriately socialize these children so their understanding of these social structures, customs and beliefs is, perhaps indefinitely, distorted.

[43] Hurford et. al. 21. It is also important to note that many Survivors never actually verbalize the words "No" or "Stop" during the assault because they are paralysed by fear, guilt or shame. However, their body language would likely communicate the fact that they were not comfortable with the abuse. Unless, of course, the abuse had occurring over a long period of time and the child was manipulating by being "sexual," or dissociating and "going through the motions."

disclosing. There's some powerful force that supersedes your own pain when you know that someone else's pain is greater. I learned how to breathe very deeply. I accepted the fact that sometimes tears were going to roll out of my eyes when I didn't want them to. And people were okay with that. I didn't feel disempowered in those moments. I felt human.

After each series of scenes, the women would come together as a community of Survivors in the transitions, or spiritual world. While the songs were sung or voiced by the vocalist, the women would share the only collective reality in the play; dancing with the candles, vocally intoning, as well as interacting and supporting each other.

Vocalist: ***(speaking over the music while the women smear mud on each other)***

Sometimes I feel like I'm drowning
Like I'm falling in the crevices in between the earth
Suffocating
Enveloped in mud
That's when I want to jump in
Stomp in it
Squish it in between my toes
Drive it under my fingernails
Smear it all over my body
Become one with it - accept it
Conquer it - live through it
That's when I feel beautiful
That's when I'm free
At that moment I find Coyote
And nobody can touch me
Run with me...[44]

Colleen: Incorporating spirituality into a piece -- I've never been involved in a piece of theatre which was so... I got to dance and show my feelings through movement, and that was something I've never done before, successfully anyway. I'm really interested in pursuing that in theatre, and **Running** provided an opportunity for me. And abstracts. Abstracts are something that, as an actor, I find really hard to wrap my mind around, and during the process we had to define the dance interludes. I remember everyone going, "Well what does this mean? Like what are we doing here? I'm not really sure what's going on. Can you sort of solidify that? Is there a book? Is

[44] Ibid. 35.

there a rule book or something?" And I remember thinking the same thing for a while, but then going, "This is all about discovering what it means so we can find what it is that propels us forward into the next scene." And everybody did find it. Even though we couldn't fully explain it in words and analyze it, we could explain what the feelings in those interludes were, you know? Everybody had a different feeling. We didn't have a universal feeling. And even though it was the most frustrating part of the rehearsal process, because we were trying to find some fundamentals to grasp onto, we didn't necessarily need uniformity in our interpretations. It was through the growth of our interpretations where meaning revealed itself and became beautiful. I remember a few times us getting very frustrated in rehearsal because we wanted to find it now. We didn't want to have to work at it, you know? Yet those struggles turned out to be some of the most powerful moments in the piece.

It had been an intense research process, and everyone felt overwhelmed by information on abuse, yet we were determined to create a meaningful play. The in-service sessions with Survivors had fuelled our drive and conviction. Various drafts of the play were read to the consultants who had participated in the original in-services with us, as well as a number of local artists. The first draft of the script was quite dark and hopeless, and it lacked theatrical structure since it largely focused on specific instances of abuse and assault. It simply said, "Ain't it awful?!" After working that angst out of our systems, and obtaining feedback from the consultants, we were ready to create three-dimensional characters, with current "lives", who were all on separate healing journeys.

Those hurts and pains that we experience in childhood don't just magically evaporate as we grow older. They rumble around in us, and when we have reached a level of strength, maturity, insight, and awareness to handle them, they come up to be worked through.[45]

Carole: This project gave me the first reason to believe I must be accepted for myself. In my early years, I was so bound up inside, I never allowed myself to emerge. I now realize I'm at the helm of my own ship. That I can navigate the rough waters alone and accept full responsibility for whatever port I end up in.

Everyone in the cast could now visualize the show in its completed form, and that knowledge, as well as our Edmonton Fringe Festival "opening" deadline, propelled us into a hectic re-write process. We bombarded each other with ideas,

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[45] Smith. May 25.

suggestions and changes. Finally, two weeks before the Fringe, we had our script. For the next two weeks, we shifted into rehearsal mode. For a couple hours a day, Colleen and I worked individually with the cast members on their monologues/one woman stories. We blocked off another couple of hours a day so Marie Nychka[46] could choreograph the dance sequences with us. The rest of the time we worked as a large group on general blocking, getting in and out of the dance transitions, and picking up the cues from one actor/story to the next.

Our first performance at the Fringe fell on the evening of a full moon. I remember one of the women in the cast, Natalie, I think, calling all of us outside the backstage door to howl at the moon together before we let the house in. It was a crazy bonding before the show. I think of it now as a symbol of our unity, and our difference. Eight distinct voices.

"As anyone who's attended a single Fringe knows, sexual abuse is not a topic unknown to this festival's stages. But the approach taken by Azimuth Theatre in this oddly inspiring series of vignettes is -- if not entirely fresh -- energetic and committed enough to seem individual. Azimuth Theatre specializes in drama that illuminates family violence and other social ills, but even without the institutional raison d'etre this is a moving, superbly executed slice of life. Slowly and gracefully, like the dances that connect them, five stories of women who were sexually abused seep out during their adult lives... to its credit, the script raises far more than buried agonies. This is also a frank questioning of what it means to be a young girl coming to understand your sexuality. Where is the line between enjoying and exploiting your body? How do children learn to protect and share themselves sexually? Potent, thought-provoking stuff and the company -- including three terrific female musicians -- prove themselves more than capable of guiding the discussion." (Helen Metella, The Edmonton Fringe Journal, Wednesday, August 17, 1994)

"My overall impression of the show is very powerful and exceptionally moving. I came away with a sense of anger for what these women had gone through, and a sense of the characters generally moving forward in their lives: moving away from their anger into a state where they could allow healing to begin. Add the atmosphere: the dance, the candles, and the music, which made this show a very mystical - magical experience for me. Let me say that this show helped restore and renew my faith in the power of theatre to touch lives and to heal." (Shelley Kline, Actor and Drama Teacher, formerly of Edmonton, Alberta.)

"The power, the passion, the sheer beauty of this work left the majority of us still in our chairs, eyes glazed, saying "Wow." (Kerrie Long, Producer, Access Television)

During the festival, Survivors, friends and artists were eager to discuss the show with us in Gazebo Park, The Next Act, the beer tents and the show line-ups. Audience members tended to love the piece because it emanated a sense of truth

[46] Marie is a local actor, dancer and choreographer.

and beauty. It validated the experiences of Survivors, and offered hope. However, a few local artists criticized the show because it touched a level of honesty where it appeared that some of the actors were engaged in personal therapy on the stage.

Art opens the closets, airs out the cellars and attics. It brings healing. But before a wound can heal it must be seen, and this act of exposing the wound to air and light, the artist's act, is often reacted to with shaming.[47]

Carole: The **Running** experience gave me the power to go out and fulfil my life instead of living vicariously through my husbands' lives or my children's. It gave me pride, knowing that by telling my story, I was able to help other women open up and deal with their own demons, and seek help.

"Theatre for many of us, is associated with entertainment, often of the Hollywood variety. Its role is to titillate, stimulate, but rarely to alter the social structure. Some participants consequently, felt that they were not prepared for the intensity of the performance, for the "dis-ease," it created, and for the awkwardness which followed." (Randall Wright, Vice President, Excalibur Learning Resource Centre in association with the Correctional Service of Canada, June 13, 1995)

I had hoped that the play could be a healing experience for the artists as well as the audience members, but I also wanted the piece to remain within the realm of theatre. And I believe it did. None of the artists was ever incapacitated by their personal issues during any of the performances. But they were always playing the tension between their character and their own experience as a woman in our culture, regardless of whether or not they were a "Survivor." This tension between the true and the theatrical is what intrigues and feeds me as an artist and an audience member. I become so much more engaged in a piece of theatre when I sense there is a deeper meaning, a personal process, operating in tandem with the performance. It has something to do with the artist investing on a spiritual level with the work. I can sense that the work is important to them, so I can't help but be drawn into their parallel journeys as a character, and as a human being. That skill/control as an artist, juxtaposed with the offering of vulnerability, as a person, is riveting when it is mastered. It takes people places. It touches our humanness. Mysteries unfold. And no one is left the same.

The cast members experienced a profound sense of validation and purpose by performing **Running** at the Fringe. Survivors came out of the woodwork. People we didn't know grabbed us in the beer tents and shared their darkest secrets. Friends we had known for years suddenly revealed that they had been sexually assaulted. It was like an epidemic of pain and shame had puked-up all over us.

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[47] Cameron. 68.

And yet, it was inspiring. Everyone urged us to continue developing the script, and they offered suggestions for improvement. Almost overnight, the cast members became "talented actors" according to the press, and (honourary) "healing mentors" according to Survivors. We had moved out of the realm of despair that we had experienced in the play development process. Everyone felt empowered.

Enthusiasm is not an emotional state. It is a spiritual commitment, a loving surrender to our creative process, a loving recognition of all the creativity around us.[48]

Almost immediately, some cast members began insisting on specific changes to their character journeys, based on feedback they had received from individual Survivors at the Fringe. I started to get nervous because many of the suggestions did not fit with the overall structure of the piece. I realized that the actors were feeling so confident with the success of the project, and determined to make the show even better, that they were all off making decisions about changes to their character journeys in isolation of the text and the rest of the group.

Colleen: As an actor, I found it a little frustrating sometimes working with actors who had limited experience, and couldn't quite get subtleties that I felt the show could have explored more. I'm not saying that inexperienced actors can't find further places to go, but the more experienced you are, the more open you are to vulnerabilities or subtleties.

I decided to bring in an independent dramaturge to assist with the workshop process. I contracted Beau Coleman, a professor of drama at the University of Alberta, to workshop **Running** with us over a period of six consecutive days in December of 1994. Beau was a respected feminist director, and I felt that she could provide much-needed objectivity, and assist me to maintain a sense of artistic leadership and control, while assisting with the re-structuring of the piece. I asked the cast members to record all of the feedback they received during the Fringe, and submit it to me so we could analyze it together, as a group with Beau, in our upcoming workshop.

Colleen: When I think of **Running**, I don't think of a therapeutic experience or catharsis relating to my own life. I found the project to be difficult in a much different way. As I'm sure everyone noticed, I resisted personal therapy during the rehearsal process because from the very beginning, my instincts were telling me that this was not a safe, non-judgemental place for people to heal. First and foremost, this was a job. We had to write a play and develop music and characters.

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[48] Cameron. 153.

I also felt that certain actors were using the subject matter as a crutch in a lot of ways. I didn't feel that their therapy should have been part of the process. Whether or not people were ready to start dealing with their own experiences shouldn't have been a factor -- they should have done that outside of the process of writing the play. I think being open about our experience, to a certain extent, would have been okay, but I thought there was way too much pressure from cast members and in-service speakers to disclose. I resisted this because I wanted to do what I was trained to do; be a professional, work and go home. If I chose to reveal any of my personal experiences in my own time (to my lover, a cast member, friend or family) then that was my choice.

After discussing all of the issues in their complexity, Beau and I decided that the workshop process would focus solely on revising the script in preparation for the tour, rather than "structuring" time for personal sharing. We knew we wouldn't have much time for sharing given the amount of feedback we had to wade through, and we thought this strategy would help the artists find a stronger sense of balance between their roles as artists, healing mentors and women on a spiritual journey.

One of the women in the cast, who was not a Survivor, was unhappy with this process shift, and she suggested that we continue to make time for personal sharing. I pointed out the fact that sharing essentially doubled the amount of time needed to prepare a scene, and that we didn't have the resources to handle that. I also indicated that the group needed to increase its focus on re-structuring the play, given all of the feedback and our tour time-line. Although I couldn't articulate it at the time, I also understood on an intuitive level that many of the artists were not able to recognize that they were losing sight of the show's aesthetic because they were so enmeshed in their validation as Survivors, healing mentors or truth speakers.

As a result of feedback we received during the Fringe, we struggled with creating a lesbian character for quite some time during the workshop. Two of the ten performers involved in the process confided to the group that they were lesbians; however, since they had not come out of the closet, they were not comfortable discussing the issues openly or presenting them on stage. After many discussions about which straight woman could play a lesbian character in light of their character journeys, we realized that the character would likely be interpreted as representing all lesbians, and this would be virtually impossible to do accurately. We were also concerned that the character would appear to have chosen to be gay as a result of being abused or assaulted by a man. The lesbians in the cast, as well as other lesbians we consulted with, could not agree on a character journey so, ultimately, we chose not to represent a gay character at all.

Carole: **Running Through The Devil's Club** made it possible for me to go forward more readily, rather than always looking back at the past, because I recognized the reasons for some of my behaviour patterns, and was ultimately able to accept myself. Especially the way I react to men. I always believed I had nothing to offer but sex. Now I am able to see that I have much more to offer.

We had made some significant changes to the script which enhanced the character journeys while retaining the existing overall structure of the piece. In January of 1995, we went back into rehearsal with the revised script. I structured the rehearsal process so that it did not have a strong focus on personal sharing, as a means of recapturing the sense of balance that was beginning to be established during the workshop. We still had occasional talking circles, but I wanted everyone to feel confident with the new script and the performance level of the show, and the only way I felt we could achieve that was by minimizing personal sharing and emphasizing the rehearsal of the play. Unfortunately, some of the women eventually started to resent the process shift and, as a result, they began lashing out in seemingly unconnected ways.

Colleen: I found it rewarding to take some of the actors off by themselves to work on scenes. I had only done one small directing project before that, so it was a wonderful opportunity for me to assistant direct **Running**. But I believe my role ultimately led to dissention and power struggles within the cast. I felt that I was resented for the fact that I was given that power. Because it was a power that the rest of the cast were not equally given. I think they liked my direction. It was just the fact that I had a little edge or something.

We were feeling pressured because we had made significant changes to the script, and some of the women were also anxious because our first week of performances was scheduled for the federal men's prisons in Alberta, and we knew that some of the inmates were sex offenders. There were tons of conflicts, personality clashes, tears, sharing circles, tongue biting and moments of silence; but in my experience, nothing completely out of the ordinary for a collaborative process of this nature. Then, seemingly out of the blue, one of the Survivors had a flashback in rehearsal,[49] while working on an abuse disclosure scene which was similar to her own childhood sexual abuse. She was not re-enacting her "own story," but it obviously reminded her of her experience. It was a very upsetting and disorienting experience for her and the rest of the cast members. After we provided her with immediate support, I recommended that she ask one of the sexual assault consultants for assistance. We all knew she had a strong personal

[49] In her mind, she returned to her abuse and was re-living it for a few moments.

support system in place, and that she would seek help -- she had a number of close friends who were therapists, and we knew that she had been working through her sexual abuse issues for several years. Ultimately, I think that her and the other cast members' anxiety was induced by the pressure of any theatrical process -- getting the show up on time. But having that standard pressure, as well as being triggered, became very scary for that particular woman. And everyone's faith in her ability to perform the show was shaken, and fear of failure became quite heightened. Despite mounting dissention between the emerging "Artist" and "Survivor/Healing Mentor" camps in the cast, the show itself was surprisingly solid, and still very magical. No one was carrying their personal disputes into the world of the play. I was hopeful that everyone would become grounded again once we got the first few performances under our belts. So, on February 22, 1995, we embarked on a three-month western Canadian tour of **Running Through The Devil's Club**.

I am standing erect in front of a chain-link fence. My dad's camera case is hanging around my neck. Behind me, to my right, is a Coyote. His mouth is open.

Carole: Each of us was on two journeys, our own, and that of the play.

Chapter Two

The Taste of Blood

Seven Sisters and Me
Sucking the poison from our open Wounds
Scream and Spit
Snarling Crazy Wild Eyes
Glaring Back through the Windshield
Ghosts among Us
The Smell of our Blood is Scaring Us...[1]

Image/ A black-and-white polaroid of me when I'm about nine years old. I have two long pony tails, high up on the sides of my head. I'm wearing a pop-top, and my belly is sticking out. I'm standing erect, in front of a chain-link fence. My dad's camera case is hanging around my neck. Behind me, to my right, is a Coyote. I am posing with him. His mouth is open.

February 22, 1995, Edmonton, Alberta
I woke up soaking wet in the middle of the night. The sheets were drenched. I'm so sick I can't believe it. I almost missed the first show today at Edmonton Institution. I asked Colleen to supervise the load-in, and drive the van out there so I could stay in bed for an extra hour. But then I had to drive my car out to the Max. and we had to detour back into town to drop it off before we could head out to Drumheller since we're going to be out of town until the week-end, and I couldn't leave my car parked there. The cast freaked out at me because we lost rest time. I tried to explain how sick I was, but they didn't want to hear it. I never get sick, but I was ready to cancel the show today.

Colleen: I still remember the feeling of lighting the candles at the beginning of the show. That was my escape from the conflict in the cast. For a few moments, I was alone with fire. My fire. I invited the audience to come run with us.

Heal: (v.) to make healthy, whole or sound; restore to health; free from ailment. To

[1] Lyrics from the song "Seven Sisters and Me" which I wrote in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, while we were touring.

effect a cure of a wound or broken bone.[2]

A couple of months before the onset of the tour, I came across the polaroid when I was flipping through a photo album at my mom and dad's. As soon as I laid eyes on it, I felt connected to it even though I didn't initially see the Coyote. I just kept staring at my image, and suddenly the Coyote revealed itself behind me. I got this weird feeling, and asked my mom if I could have the photo.

I can see your face
Floating in this bathtub of tears
Telling me to remember to breathe
And I'm trying
Trying to believe...[3]

As a cast, we had regular talking circle debriefs to ensure that everyone was able to share information or personal learnings, address administrative issues, resolve problems within the group, and normalize our touring experiences. When people in the opposing "artist" and "Survivor/healing mentor" camps became irritated with each other on the road, they didn't want to participate in the circles any more. Because we were exhausted, and we had lost rest time due to illness, poor performance scheduling during the first two weeks of the tour, early wake-up calls to catch airplanes, and delayed flights, I didn't argue the point. I recognized that everyone needed as much private time as they could get.

Alison: ***He always comes into my room in the middle of the night. He whispers to me but I don't hear him. I just lose myself in the wallpaper.***[4]

Colleen: I think we all found solace with fire. Cleaning out the candles, feeling the hot wax on our hands gave us some sense of control over the situation. We all wanted to be the candle caretakers. It gave us peace.

Sometimes audience members were obviously quite angry at the beginning of the post-performance discussions, and I had to wonder if they weren't triggered by something in the play. Surprisingly, I only recall us being accused of man-bashing on one occasion -- in a review by a female journalist in Sherwood Park, Alberta. (Which seemed so ironic, and a touch painful for me since I considered Sherwood Park to be my "home" because, for the most part, I had lived and worked in the

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[2] Webster's Dictionary. 617.

[3] Hurford. "Seven Sisters and Me" song lyrics.

[4] Hurford et. al. 21.

hamlet from the time I was fourteen until I left the local R.C.M.P. Detachment in 1993.) I got the sense that audience members recognized the authenticity of the stories, and were choosing to respect the work, rather than minimize it by suggesting that we were man-haters.

Colleen: I think the first week of the tour was traumatic for people. On top of the fact that there were some personality conflicts, there was a wide range of experience among actors, and the first week was gruelling. The schedule was written on paper, but we were so excited we didn't really absorb it. And we were performing for really tough audiences, you know? I mean it was an experience that we didn't expect until we started doing it. And people panicked. People fucking panicked.

I put the photograph in a clear plastic frame, and packed it in my suitcase. That, and a candle, a few sticks of incense, and my journal. Besides our clothes and gear, there wasn't room in the van for much else.

Mercedes: ***I feel my body tense as the cold fingers creep up and down my legs, and pry into my opening. "Relax, calm down, open your legs wider."***[5]

Colleen: I still remember the three-show day we had, the first week of the tour, when everyone got that wicked flu. I knew that we were in for a rough road when one of the actors freaked out after a show. A big red light went off in my head because she had been a rock in the group. I remember the feeling I had in my stomach, and it never went away after that day. Ever.

February 28, 1995, Vancouver, British Columbia

It's been so crazy, painful, tense. I'm trying to connect with the reasons I am doing this tour -- and the reasons I do this work. Sometimes I can't remember... I am shedding layers and layers of skin... trying to discover who I am, what I need and want. I'm not sure what will result at this moment.

Colleen: A strange thing happened. Three of the other women started calming her and taking her energy, and then they started bitching like you wouldn't believe. It was like osmosis. And we all did that. Took on other people's energy. And we got into the van and everyone was angry.

Image/ Blood on Dirt

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[5] Ibid.

The most painful thing for me was watching the cast members in the "Survivor/healing mentor" camp withdrawing from the rest of the group in order to cope with the demands of the tour. We were a diverse group of women ranging in age from nineteen to fifty-one years old. We came from different cultural backgrounds, and had varied interests, values and beliefs. We were always bleeding at the same time, and that proved to be volatile when we were under stress. Looking back, I can see that there weren't many times when we weren't under the gun in some way or another. There were times I loved each of these women in such a profound way that I cannot accurately express it in words. There were also times that I was angry at, disappointed in, and ashamed of each one of us. I guess we all had normal responses to abnormal situations.

"Their ability to perform and reenact sexual abuse so profoundly and then minutes later pull themselves together to assist with the debriefing of many individuals from the audience, speaks to their commitment and integrity to elicit consciousness on a global level about the seriousness, prevalence, and impact that sexual abuse/assault has on the survivors." (Shannon Conner, Coordinator, Cranbrook Women's Resource Centre)

Carole: I now realize that the group disfunction was not really disfunction, but function. If you get my meaning... We were all working out our own problems, and the play was emotional and heavy. It would have been abnormal for us to have been in agreement all the time.

I remember being in the bathroom, getting ready for a performance, and everyone in the cast was talking about how bad the mud smelled. Some of us were gagging, it was so rancid. It was early spring and the ground was frozen, so we couldn't find authentic mud anywhere on our tight schedule. We ended up using potting soil from a greenhouse for the rest of the tour, but it never quite felt the same.

It was obvious that the women were extremely committed to the project -- they were consistently putting on a fabulous show twice a day.[6] But the group dynamic was becoming progressively negative and dysfunctional. It was clear that the two opposing camps had been firmly established, and some of the women in the "Survivor/healing mentor" sub-group, in particular, were starting to act out in negative, hurtful or inappropriate ways. So I called a cast meeting about two weeks into the tour, and suggested that we bring in an independent facilitator to help us work through our group dynamic issues. But the women rejected the idea, as well as a conflict resolution workshop.

At the time, I didn't feel like it was appropriate for me to force the women to participate in a conflict resolution session but, in retrospect, I think I should have. It might have

[6] There were three days during the three month tour where we performed three shows a day. In retrospect, I realize that, given the intensity of this type of project and the travel involved in touring, two performances should be the maximum number of shows scheduled on any given day.

helped re-establish a sense of personal accountability, and tolerance for other points of view. It may have also equalized the power inequities within the group. The younger cast members, especially, had virtually no voice what-so-ever. Additionally, I think it would have led to the provision of concrete support for the Survivors in the group, who eventually appeared to be having difficulty coping with the demands of the tour. Although I had arranged to have therapists available to provide support to the cast, they were not required to utilize that assistance.

"In terms of my (sexual abuse/assault) clients, many were moved that their issues could be so realistically portrayed and see that as validation for their hurt. They also felt empowered by the growth that they could see they've accomplished in facing and working on their own healing." (Peg Budd, Stopping the Violence Counsellor, Revelstoke, B.C.)

To repair or reconcile. To become whole or sound; mend.[7]

Carole: The project made me more able to have relationships with other women and not judge. One never knows what has happened to other women to form their behaviour. I have become more forgiving of different behaviour these days because I realize it's all based somewhere in the past. I now question why people behave the way they do.

March 4, 1995, Victoria, British Columbia

Forgiveness. Forgiveness of self. Forgiveness of others. Letting go. Resolving. Bringing the pain to a sense of closure. This is what we are working toward in our healing journeys... My family thinks the play is too heavy, depressing and not useful. They cannot see the beauty in it. I hate it when I doubt myself, my perceptions, when people I care about do not see and feel what I know. I need to learn from this. I need to acknowledge my own truths. Honour them. Even when I feel, or am truly, alone. This is what takes courage. And this is what makes me feel grounded. It is about connecting with my intuition.

I needed objective assistance with the group dynamic, so I started consulting with Evelyn Lupul, a therapist who had been involved with the process in 1994. I would come home to Edmonton and describe the women and their behaviours, as well as their roles in the group dynamic as I saw them, and she would work through the issues with me and provide suggestions to deal with the problems. The most critical thing I remember her saying to me was that I couldn't fix the group dynamic because the women didn't want it to be fixed. It was clear that they were not

[7] Webster's Dictionary. 617.

interested in re-unifying as a group. Sadly, Evelyn reaffirmed my fear that I didn't have the ability to change the group dynamic without eliminating some of the negative women.

Image/ Water Sliding Down a Windshield

I was struggling with my belief that the cast members "knew" what they needed, and that I should respect their choices. Not project my ideals onto them about the group dynamic, or my "solutions" for their personal healing issues. Given the diversity of the women, I couldn't realistically expect them to avoid conflict every minute of every day. And I certainly didn't have the right to assume what they needed in their personal healing journey. Yet, as their employer, I eventually became aware that some of the women were having difficulty coping with the project because it was triggering their association to feelings of powerlessness and rage, so they began acting out in inappropriate ways. The lines between the personal and the professional were blurry, and I was trying to determine when it was appropriate for me to intervene and ensure that they received assistance. If they had been teenagers, the line would have been very clear. But we were talking about a group of adults -- who advised me that they were capable of making their own decisions, and that they didn't need my "advice".

Carole: I don't think any of us really could think of a healthy process when we were so into the abuse during the project. I lot of us came from an angry place and couldn't see out. I know I did. But now I realize that, having dealt with the anger, it's time to move forward and heal. Anger becomes negative and hurts the owner more than anyone else.

I thought about firing a couple of the most negative cast members -- one of them was a Survivor, and both of them were in the "Survivor/healing mentor" sub-group. But they were obviously so invested in the project that it just didn't feel appropriate. They were also co-creators with a first right of refusal to work on the project. This was further complicated by the fact that our performance schedule was booked solid, so we would have had to cancel or postpone shows, and we didn't have a major contingency fund to cover the cost of replacing actors. Because I wasn't prepared to replace any of the actors, Evelyn and I agreed that I needed to find ways to protect myself since the cast members were projecting a lot of their anger and frustration at me. So I decided to distance myself from the group by having a separate hotel room. Since there were eight of us, we arranged for two extra rooms, and each person had their own place every seven nights. We chalked it up to mental health night.

Sound/ Five Doors Slamming Shut

Colleen: Did I ultimately resolve conflicts with the cast members? No. Not by far. I don't think it's necessary to resolve them now. It's not an angry throw-back, it's just that I don't have any burning urge to do that. I'm not around those women any longer. I don't work in any of the same communities. I still feel strongly about some of the people on the tour and I remember some of the really shitty things we did to each other. And I don't like that about us. But I'm not angry about it any more. If I saw those women today, I would just connect with them. I wouldn't start reminiscing about our old conflicts. I don't have an urge to go back there with them. It's not because I understand what happened. I'm not that big of a person I don't think. I just don't need to deal with extraneous conflict in my life right now. There are other important things that I need to focus on. But I don't harbour a special hatred, overtly, in the present for those them.

March 4, 1995, Victoria, British Columbia Continued...

One of the women in the cast keeps going back and forth about the issue of disclosing her sexual abuse in the panel discussions. She doesn't want to "lie" about her truth. Other women in the cast want to be recognized for their acting ability rather than being Survivors. Boundaries change as we change. They stretch and retract depending on our mental states. The actors are "ready" for growth -- notes -- changes now.

Audience members tell me that this is an important work, but somehow I'm still questioning. It's been so very painful -- this tour. I'm trying to figure out what I'm supposed to be learning about myself. About the way I deal with people -- hierarchy versus collaboration.

March 5, 1995, Calgary, Alberta

Stuck in the airport. Exhausted. The airplane is malfunctioning -- so is my brain. Sometimes I love these women -- other times I hate them. Despise them. This tour is gruelling. I realize that it's impossible to please eight people at any given moment. I find myself segregating from them -- smoking in order to define my own space. Clear my head. Back to minus 22 celsius weather. I woke up with a heavy feeling this morning. Tired on the inside. Achy feeling in my soul. Victoria downtown is a hectic, psycho, noisy, scary place. I didn't like it this time. During the ***Maelstrom*** *tour we stayed in a quiet, reserved area by the water, and it was serene. I find I need that when I'm on tour.*

Especially with this show. Eight women, some Survivors, trying to define themselves. Trying to cope with themselves and the stress of this tour, living with seven other dynamic human beings. I still feel anger toward the cast for attacking me in the van on the way to Drumheller. I feel betrayed by two of my friends in the cast, and confronted by another. Another woman is always angry and she projects it onto the wrong people.

Colleen: Frustration was at a height for me when the conflict got incredibly destructive, but we didn't have a clue how to resolve it. We didn't have an impartial bone in our bodies -- we were so intertwined in fear, insecurity and blame. The cast eventually started to get help from outside support networks, but by that time it was too late. Considering the amount of anger we were carrying around for each other and the tour in general, it was amazing that the tour was such a success. We still put on a powerful show every day.

March 5, 1995, Calgary, Alberta Continued...
There is conflict and difference among the native clans we have been visiting. West Coast Indians have different traditions than the Cree -- Woodland Cree -- different from the Blackfoot. Conflict over representing sacred tradition of smudging on stage in North Vancouver with the Squamish and Burrard Bands. One of the native cast members gets frustrated with the other clans. She gets angry at me if I don't "check" with her first, before I respond to a native person's question. Yet, when I invite her to respond to the question, she often declines. She stuffs[8] and then becomes angry at me in the van. It is difficult.

Colleen: I was always scared of sitting somebody down, that I was having a conflict with, 'cause I don't like confrontation. A few times, I just wanted to go, "Look, I've got to be truthful here, and this is the way I'm feeling." But I really thought if I did that, we might not have a show that night. It was like walking on eggshells.

March 5, 1995, Calgary, Alberta Continued...
One of the cast members is a control freak most of the time. Into blaming. I'm trying to establish a work environment which does not operate on a win-lose system. It's hard. People are socialized to blame

[8] She does not express her feelings/thoughts in the moment. They eat away at her until she becomes angry, later.

others for mistakes rather than learning from them and working together to resolve problems. Sometimes I feel like we haven't experienced enough of our own healing to assume responsibility of being mentors for others.

Colleen: The most appalling memory I have is when one of the youngest actors walked off stage in the middle of the show because she forgot her lines. I still remember being totally blown away. I mean we had one of the best audiences we'd had in three weeks. There were about two-hundred-and-fifty people there, and the first scene was going so well. We were happy. We had a good venue, and she fuckin' walked off stage. It was so wild. It was such a neat experience too, because the audience actually thought it was part of the play. We were all just watching her walk across the stage, thinking, "Where the fuck is she going?" And nobody in the audience seemed to notice until Deb stopped the show and said that one of the actors must be ill and that we were going to take a ten minute break. That's how grounded she was in her angst about not remembering her lines. And the audience didn't mind either, which was really amazing. We just picked it up after the break. I was really proud of her, even though she shouldn't have walked off in the first place, because she cried during the break, and then she got back up in front of two-hundred-and-fifty people again and started the scene. It blew my mind.

Audience members perceived the cast members to be healing mentors because they could see the characters moving through various stages of healing during the show. Audiences thought the women were knowledgable about the issues, and a source of wisdom. The performers became role models for many of the Survivors in the audience, even though we made it clear in the post-performance discussions that not all of the artists were Survivors. Because it was so validating to hear how much we were helping audience members, we assumed that role, and I think it intensified the expectations and pressure we were already experiencing.

March 7, 1995, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

We've been in Maple Creek for the last two days. After the first show at the Healing Lodge, Kim B., a good childhood friend of mine, and I reconnected. It was unbelievable. She had moved away from Swift Current, but was recently hired to work at the Healing Lodge, and ***Running*** *was part of the staff orientation program, since the Lodge hasn't opened yet. She came back to the Lodge after our second performance and gave me a card with a beautiful note, a piece of cloth*

wrapped around a book entitled Spirit of the Wolf, and some sage which was blessed by an Elder from Saskatoon. It was tied with a red leather string, as was the sage -- which was wrapped in paper. It's so bizarre, but I had never really realized that she was Metis. I mean I knew it, but it was never acknowledged when we were kids. Maybe it's because she lived with her mom, who is white, and her lifestyle was similar to mine. She didn't seem "different."

Carole: My favourite memory was in B.C., I think the Fernie area, when the mainly native audience took us into their circle at the end of the play and we really were one. Men and women, regardless of ethnic background, colour or creed, joined in that circle and shared a prayer. I felt so proud. Eighty percent of the people there that night had been abused. I felt the power as we said the Serenity Prayer together. It was overwhelming and brings me to tears as I think of it now.

March 7, 1995, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Continued...

I smudged when we got to Saskatoon. Since it was my first time smudging alone, I tried to remember everything Bertha taught me. I closed my eyes after, and this calm came over me. When I opened my eyes, I noticed that I was sitting in front of a mirror, on the bed. I was staring at myself, and my eyes started watering, tearing. Shivers came through me in waves. My vision started to blur and I kept staring into my eyes. I didn't look like me. I looked like I do when I go running in the mud. I have that Warrior look on my face. My eyes are powerful. The lines on my face are strong. I look scary. My hair is wild. I look like a Wild Woman. I kept staring into my eyes. I started seeing my image transforming into images of other women, shifting positions. I saw me as an old woman, and as a child. Sometimes, I wasn't sure if I was just seeing women, or if there were men in the images. A couple times it looked like it could have been passive, calm Elder males, and sometimes like Warrior males. The women looked like they were from different time periods. Like the turn of the century and modern. I feel drugged right now. Like I am sedated. I wasn't scared really. I felt like there was a greater power in the room with me. Before the women appeared, there was a white image to my right. It wasn't concrete; it was like a Spirit. It was beside me -- to my right. Sometimes there was this white glow on my chest -- on my shirt. Sometimes the candle light would become larger in the mirror while I was staring at the images. There was a mauve -- purple glow sometimes before my image would

change. Some of the images were scary -- even ugly, but I wasn't frightened of them. I was safe. I am safe now. I feel drunk. I am waving inside. Maybe I'm just grounded. Centred. I'm not sure, exactly, but I think this experience lasted longer than an hour, but it seemed like ten minutes. Once, when the candles flickered, I noticed the photograph of me with the Coyote. I picked it up and held it to my chest. Tears were pouring down my face, but I wasn't "crying." I kept feeling this rush of energy moving through me. I was talking out loud and in my head. Asking to understand what I was seeing. Trying to see what I was supposed to see. As if I knew what I was doing -- talking about. As if I was guiding and asking questions. This makes no sense -- I know. The word "arrow head" just popped into my head. I'm thinking of the Elder, Arnold, who I met in B.C. last year. About my dream about him giving me the native baby in the white cloth. Bertha thinks he was giving me my own child back. Somehow this makes sense to me... When I unwrapped Kim's gift, I was shaking. I started to feel overwhelmed with emotion. Tears started coming, but I wasn't crying. There is something going on. I started bleeding today. I'm not supposed to for another two weeks. That is really strange. I'm in Saskatoon though -- blue dome sky. The Elder that Kim speaks of, is from Saskatoon also. Something is going on. It feels bigger than me for sure. I feel alone, but not afraid. I really have no one to believe in me right now. I feel alone. But not weak. Powerful. But not in a powerful way -- as in control and domination. Powerful as in a force. A force greater than me, and stuff is moving through me. I feel like a vessel or something. A carcass. My image looks haggard and scraggy. I am ugly and beautiful at the same time. I wish Evelyn was here so I could explain it to her. Maybe I'll show her these notes if it feels right later. I'm so tired. Something about dreaming is running around in my head. Sleep will come quickly tonight.

Tanis: ***My eyes are squeezed shut. Go away, please. I'm sleeping. Can't you see I'm sleeping? Leave me alone. Don't touch me. Oh you stink. You are so gross...***[9]

Although the Edmonton Institution For Women was one of the primary target groups for the tour, the facility didn't open until October, 1995, five months after the conclusion of the project. At the time of the tour, most federally sentenced

[9] Hurford et. al. 22.

women were housed in the Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston, Ontario (Regional Headquarters Region of the C.S.C.) Having only one federal female institution virtually eliminated the women's opportunities for family visitations as well as support from their communities. So, over the past three years, the C.S.C. has been opening federal prisons for female offenders in every region in the country. We performed **Running** in the Pacific Region's newly opened Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women in British Columbia, and the Maple Creek Healing Lodge in Saskatchewan, an experimental Aboriginal Women's facility in the Prairie Region. We were also independently invited to perform at the Pine Grove Institution in Manitoba, a provincial prison for women who are serving two years-less-a-day.

"The target audience for this performance was the public at large and practitioners in the field. Interestingly, the strongest representation was from Aboriginal Women's groups and the public, mostly women who identified themselves as having survived sexual abuse... The audience cried with the women (actors) as they relived their stories of abuse. They also rose in spirit with the stories of survival and hope. It was a roller-coaster ride laden with pain, grief, optimism and faith." (Sharon Kuropatwa, Program Director, Manitoba Research Centre on Family Violence and Violence Against Women)

It was extremely difficult to perform the play to incarcerated women. They were by far our most volatile audiences since, clearly, most of them were Survivors. They often sobbed throughout the entire performance while we choked back our own tears. Sometimes, particularly after the flashback scene, women had to leave because they couldn't bear to watch their own stories unfolding again before their eyes. Fortunately, they would usually return, with a friend or caregiver by their side, to see where the characters had ended up on their healing journeys, or to participate in the post-performance discussion. Despite the excruciating pain, for both the women in the audience and the women on the stage, these performances were the most meaningful for me. It was so moving to see these wrist-slash scarred, massively tattooed, seemingly unbreakable, broken women actually "see" their experiences validated, and their survival celebrated. They would literally cling to the performers after the discussion, hugging them, touching them and exchanging stories. It was a profound, communal healing experience.

To free from evil; cleanse; purify; to heal the soul.[10]

Several survivors of sexual abuse/assault said they found it to be healing in that it affirmed some of their present or previous feelings and experiences. The Women's Centre's Women's Counsellor (who works with survivors of sexual abuse/assault and survivors of domestic violence) has had many new clients in the past month, both self-referrals and referrals from local agencies; this could well be

[10] Webster's Dictionary. 617.

partially due to **Running Through The Devil's Club.**" (Cathy McFadden, Port Alberni Women's Resources, B.C.)

Image/ A Woman Squeezing a Shard of Mirror in Her Bloody Hand

March 8, 1995, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
I am angry at one of the women in the cast. I told her that I need her to talk to me, if she has issues with me, rather than going behind my back. I felt hurt that she suggested that I was treating everyone like robots. I'm tired and I feel broken inside. I do not have the answers or solutions to all of the questions and problems with this tour. I need her help.

Colleen: My worst memories are fighting in the van and trying to stay calm by just looking at the road. Four or five a.m. wake-up calls, eating at Subway and gas stations, feeling helpless, hopeless and hated. Talk-backs when I was feeling not at all like a healing force.

March 8, 1995, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Continued...
It feels like one of my friends in the cast is using this tour as a forum for old issues with me, and her perceived exploitation from previous employers. It's like she wants to discredit me with the cast rather than address the issues. I feel like she wants blood. She can't articulate what it is that she wants and, therefore, I can't give it to her. So I am the bad guy all the time. She has lost sight of me as a human being who's trying to make this project work. I am not an institution or a bank or her mother. It's like she wants me to "pay" for all of the other companies or people she perceives have taken advantage of her. Like everything is about me exploiting and betraying her. I feel betrayed by her.

Colleen: I thought we were getting pretty good pay. I mean, we were getting fifty dollars a show, and doing roughly eight shows a week, so that wasn't bad. That's in the same ball park as Equity's[11] "G" House scale. And getting per diems on days off was great. The hotel rooms were more than sufficient. We had a few crappy ones but, all in all, we had good rooms and time by ourselves. I know that was really expensive though. We could have used four-star hotels, hot tubs and thousand dollar-a-day per diems, but let's be realistic. The

[11] The Canadian Actor's Equity Association.

tour gave us breaks and perks. For a low-budget tour, we were given a lot financially. But that wasn't the point. Nothing would have made us happy, no matter how hard anyone tried.

When I was consulting with Evelyn, she suggested that the Survivors in the cast had shifted into a perpetrator role. That they had once been powerless "victims," but that they were now taking power and, perhaps unknowingly, using it over other people. I also noticed this pattern with some of the women who were not Survivors.

Colleen: I think that was the volatile thing about the tour. I never knew from one minute to the next if someone was going to quit. I knew there were a few people in the cast who would have walked out if they were confronted about their behaviour.

March 10, 1995, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan

Nancy Gitzel (Family Violence Coordinator for the Prairie Region of the Correctional Service of Canada) has been travelling with us to all of the prisons in Alberta and Saskatchewan, but she is leaving tomorrow. One of the women I'm in conflict with hugged me tonight. The other is my roommate. I miss my boyfriend. Tonight in Saskatoon at the S.A.S.S. Conference, I was reaffirmed by sexual assault centre volunteers. Realize that a lot of people are in denial about sex crimes. I have a need to "name" the truth. The Group dynamic is a bit better than before. Saskatchewan Penitentiary was brutal today. A group of sex offenders in the audience laughed at Colleen during her character's rape scene. Blake (Chief of Education and Training at Saskatchewan Penitentiary) said the inmates were coping through laughter. I can understand that. I had lunch with two psychologists today. They were telling me about an inmate who couldn't identify with his own crime of choking his wife to death. He said she jumped and danced around, and that is what actually killed her. Like, if she would have stayed still, she would have lived. He can't take responsibility for killing her with his hands. Another man's wife left one day with only the clothes on her back. Nothing else. He can't see her fear. Only his own shock at her leaving. It is so fucked. Remember the guy in Bowden who said that he was just a bank robber, and that his crime was no where near as bad as a rape, because he wasn't actually going to hurt her? He couldn't see that holding a gun to someone's head is just as threatening, since the victim does not know if she will live or die.

Colleen: My worst memories overall, were just the sadness, for me, of the fights. The irate inmate audiences pale in comparison to the pain I felt fighting in the van. Any shit we took from an audience was way easier to deal with than with the cast members. So when some of the inmate audience members laughed out loud during the rape scene that I did, I don't have a bad memory of that. I understood that. Whereas the fighting, I couldn't understand. That's one thing I can say I've learned, is that people really react funny when they're coping with shit. I didn't realize that people can react in so many different ways. I have a friend in Vancouver and she just laughs all the time when something is going wrong in her life. She just starts laughing. It's amazing. Her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, her one sister died of alcoholism, her other sister died of leukaemia, she had a hell Christmas when her mother had the mastectomy, and had to go into the hospital for stress related disorders, and she's laughing the whole time she's telling me this. And it's still two months fresh. I just realized that people cope however their bodies take them. We shoved the show in people's faces, and they coped with it however they could. I'm sure some people didn't get anything out of the project. I'm sure they shut right off because they couldn't take it. But the laughing, I understood that. The laughing, inward, in our group, was more hurtful than that.

March 10, 1995, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan Continued...

I don't want to forget the psycho inmate who was writing a book about stopping violence against women; the black lab guard dog, the sexual harassment and the snow-covered tee-pee at Saskatchewan Penitentiary; The plumber who saw me at the Max. in Edmonton and then again at Sask. Pen.; The immature female teen inmates at Pine Grove, their gifts of home-made leather and bead key chains, and the mothers, there, who felt personally attacked by Alison's line, to her mother, in the play, "Maybe if you weren't such a bitch, he (dad) wouldn't have to come to me" (for sex); Bannock; Burnaby -- crying; Lloydminster -- crying; Bowden -- the inmate who apologised for asking me my age, and seeing the inmate again who ran the Chapel when I was on tour with ***Maelstrom****; Vi-Co chocolate milk in Saskatchewan -- one of the pleasures of my childhood.*

The same Survivor who had the flashback in rehearsal triggered when we travelled to her home town to perform the play. She became extremely anxious before the show because she was worried that people in her community might recognize her story. Ultimately, that was the only incident where it was clear that someone's

volatile behaviour was directly connected to their abuse. The other problems or outbursts were not obviously connected. At any rate, this woman did not want my assistance and she became angry with me when I attempted to check-in with her. Around this same time, one of the other women in the cast accused me of re-victimizing the Survivors in the group by making them reenact sexual abuse every day for three months. The thought had crossed my mind on several occasions, and I had checked-in with the Survivors on a regular basis to see how they were doing. Up until the last few weeks of the tour, they assured me that they were fine, and that they didn't require any assistance. Still, I think they could have benefited from the consistent support of a trained therapist, given the nature of the process -- we all could have used a continuous and objective sounding board at the very least.

March 11, 1995, North Battleford, Saskatchewan

Binu found an empty bottle of Strawberry Angel under her sheets in the hide-a-bed tonight. This hotel sucks. There are pools of grease in the coffee.

"I have received very positive feedback from audience members. Some typical comments were: 'The theatre presentation made the topic very accessible; beyond the cognitive element; very powerful', 'Live theatre really delivers emotional impact. Showed realistic effect that abuse has on people's lives'. It is the belief of the Safer Campuses Committee that the performance was a valuable addition to our Violence Prevention Awareness Week." (Marilyn Bowker, Safer Campuses Project Coordinator, Camosun College, Victoria, B.C.)

March 12, 1995, Regina, Saskatchewan

I feel like a bug crawling in any direction... My only purpose is to finish this tour. Even that -- the conviction -- flounders. I'm sure even bugs don't feel like looking for food sometimes. I feel like I'm beyond needing to be held.

"One feels so all alone, and yet the play creates an awareness that you are not alone." (Audience Member, taken from Audience Feedback Forms compiled by Shannon Andrews, B.S.C., for the Ksan House Society and The Ministry of Women's Equality, Terrace, B.C.)

Colleen: I don't have a most favourite memory of the tour -- when it comes to simple things, it was the halibut burger in Prince Rupert, or when the group lightened up a bit when we were driving from Regina to Saskatoon on a sunny spring day. The prairie was magnificent. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. And all eight of us just started singing **The Eagles' Greatest Hits** over and over and over. We were just singing. There was no talking. No bitching. We were just harmonizing and having a good time. I remember watching the

golden fields sparkle, and feeling at peace.

March 13, 1995, Regina, Saskatchewan
Clouds drifting by quickly. Wind changes things before your eyes. Train right outside my window. Just like our house when I was growing up. Awesome, despite the train whistle at 2:00 a.m. Open window. Cars driving by. Light rain. Chilled to the bone. Massage. War paint. Cheese balls in the lounge with Althea and Colleen. Had coffee with Jocelyn and her new baby today. Another childhood friend who's moved away from Swift Current. It was so nice to reconnect with her.

As Binu, Michelle and I walked into the prison chapel before the show, some guy in the audience blurted out "Alright, chicks in war paint".

Colleen: **Running** changed me in the sense that there was a whole fucking conglomeration of that type of guy in one section when we were performing. I mean I saw audiences that were really hostile to begin with. I still remember Mountain Institution, guys in the front row were going "Yeah, what we could do with that redhead. Oh, I want that redhead. And what about the blonde." You know? I mean we were all being objectified at the beginning. Until we showed them that we knew what the fuck we were doing and that we're not pieces of meat. And that was proof during the talk-back sessions when we had guys crying. Probably some of the guys that were yelling at us in the first place. Or guys who were listening. Watching us. Being quiet. It doesn't bug me that three guys laughed during my rape scene because you could hear a fuckin' pin drop during the rest of the play. I knew I had their attention. So I guess it's reaffirmed a lot of stuff. That's one thing that **Running** did for me. It's reaffirmed my power in that sense, and the power of theatre.

March 15, 1995, Trenton, Ontario
Spent the entire night on the telephone with my sister, my mom, and my boyfriend's answering machine. Trying to piece together this experience. What am I supposed to learn from it? It's about going back to my roots (seeing people from my home town while touring in Saskatchewan). On another level, it's about me offering my power to other people -- co-workers, friends, lovers, family members. I'm learning how to recognize when I am giving my power away. I'm not sure when it is appropriate for me to do that. Maybe never?

Colleen: I really noticed that two of the younger women changed big time,

half-way through the tour. They needed to find that sense of power that the big girls were getting -- or so they thought. It was like teenage angst.

March 15, 1995, Trenton, Ontario Continued...

On another level, it's recognizing that this popular theatre process requires <u>time</u> and personal investment. Without those two things, the process will fail. I worry about this process in terms of time because time costs money, and I worry about personal investment. The cast is not invested in the project in the way they used to be. I certainly am not either. They feel overworked and underpaid. Are they unable to invest like the ***Maelstrom*** *cast because they need those thick boundaries in place in order to cope with the tour and the audience response? Why don't they really seem to care about the impact that the play is/could be having on audience members? Why don't they care about each other? Are we too much alike? Is it the close quarters? There is a sense of selfishness, of self-centredness rather than a feeling of doing something wonderful for themselves, womankind and society. It feels shallow.*

Colleen: I felt that the work was important because of the reaction we got from people. Even though I knew that the subject matter we were dealing with was important, I didn't fully realize it until we actually saw people's reactions. I recognized that it was important when people would stay and talk to us for an hour-and-a-half after a show, totally inspired, enthraled, admitting to us that they'd been abused as children, or that they had assaulted someone, being totally vulnerable, and listening to us. Creating some sort of awareness with these people. I mean, sometimes I had line-ups of people waiting to talk to me after a show. They just wanted to share with me, you know?

"Inmates were initially quite anxious about attending the performance as approximately 40% of our population are sex offenders. An even larger percentage have some form of family violence. The potential of repercussions was feared and both Institutional Psychologists plus the Community Sex Offender Therapists were available for counselling if required... The group soon relaxed and became quite involved in the presentation. Very few, if any, left the performance. A comment that there was no male performers was seen as neutral and well explained by the (Azimuth) commentator. Personally, I felt that having faceless male abusers had the positive effect of saying that so many more than those identified are guilty of this act and causes the audience to look at themselves. There was no specific follow up action taken as Rockwood Institution has open Sex Offender and Family Violence programming available. The performance was used to sensitize both staff and inmates and to augment the programming currently available." (Doug Spiers, Deputy Warden,

Rockwood Institution, Stony Mountain, Manitoba)

> ***March 16, 1995, Warkworth, Ontario***
> *Highway 401 eastbound to Kingston. River has melted. Birch trees among the shrubs and evergreens. Farmland, wetland, asphalt, stone houses, dairyland, cows, streaks of clouds across the sky, blue sky, sun, very warm, soft warm breeze. OJ 95.5 on the FM dial through Belleville. Farm houses, commuters, me in the Budget Rental van. Fourteen degrees celsius. History in the buildings. Winding stream, sawdust grass, Swiss McDonald's, Canadian Flags, rust coloured shrubs, Raven, washboard clouds, those tall weeds that look like wheat, rolling hills, slate rock, swamp trees, patches of snow.*

The main criticism of the piece, from both men and women in the post-performance discussions, was that it did not include male victims of sexual abuse and assault. We explained the intention of creating a women-centred piece, and pointed out that, according to numerous statistics distributed by the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, females are victimized more often than males, despite the fact that they also tend to report abuse more often. This issue was raised a number of times by both men and women. On some occasions, it seemed as though violence against men was a genuine concern and, since touring this play, I have no doubt that there are a great number of Canadian men who were sexually abused and assaulted as children, but have not reported it to anyone. However, on other occasions, it felt like some audience members were attempting to deflect from the issues of male dominance, traditional gender role socialization and violence against women. When we felt that audiences were denying these issues, we assertively encouraged men to get together to write a play about the male experience in this regard. This suggestion seemed to surprise audiences, but it ultimately allowed us to refocus the discussion.

"Many students commented that they wished that they had brought spouses or partners to the production for they would have liked to share the valuable learning experience. They felt that then they too would understand. They felt that it was a pity that more men did not attend for the same reason. They felt that it is not just a 'women's issue'." (Vivien McCoy, Alberta Vocational College, Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta)

> ***March 16, 1995, Warkworth, Ontario Continued...***
> *Standing ovation from the inmates. Most of them were sex offenders. The power went out during the show, so I had to sing the songs a cappella. The ceiling fans blew half of the candles out during the show. In the afternoon performance, the staff were overwhelmed by the play. A female psychologist locked eyes with me during the last song. It was*

such a powerful experience that tears started welling up in my eyes, but I couldn't let go. It just didn't feel right to let go. She needed something from me so I held on and managed to keep it together. In the panel discussion, another female psychologist said she has her doubts as to whether there's a cure for sex offenders. There were numerous requests for a show about male Survivors. Gail McCarthy, Family Violence Project Coordinator for the Ontario Region, says people need boundaries to protect their own human spirit.

"The guys are still talking about what we experienced last night... It was a great performance duplicating 'sexual abuse'. I understand what the play was about and it really got me thinking, about all the young people on the street, abusing drugs and alcohol and getting into trouble with the law. Maybe a lot of them came from the same kind of abuse your show put out. It's the first time I ever really thought about it that way." (C.Y. [Name Protected] on behalf of the Native Brotherhood, Rockwood Institution, Stony Mountain, Manitoba)

Colleen: Most of the people we met in institutions had been abused when they were children. It was a catch 22 for me because we were performing for survivors in the community who were really trying to get their lives together, and then we were performing for perpetrators. What makes one person perpetuate the cycle and another person want to get better? I still don't know. I don't know why some people do what they do, and don't take responsibility as an adult. I don't know what I've learned about that, because I still don't understand it. I learned a lot about the perception of violence in the prisons. A lot of those talk backs were about prisoners who really believed that violence could be solved with violence. That we could solve sex crimes with violence. They have no perception of what violence is -- where it ends. It doesn't end for them.

"The post-performance discussion was handled well and some comments were along the lines of, 'Those skinners[12] at Rockwood should see this play'." (Cal Croy, Coordinator Personal Development Programs, Stony Mountain Institution, Manitoba)

Often male inmates were angry after the play, and openly stated that sex offenders should be killed. We attempted to challenge these men to recognize the irony of using violence as a means of stopping violence. The post-performance discussions were very heated around this issue, but inmates would often hang around afterward to continue the dialogue, disclose, discuss the play, or thank us for our performance. The piece obviously acted as a catalyst for critical thought and discussion in prison environments; however, sometimes it felt like these men

[12] Sex offenders

just didn't want to acknowledge male dominance and, other times, it seemed like light bulbs were going off all over the place. The cast members were very conscious of personal boundaries at all times, but particularly in male prisons. They essentially assessed and responded to each interaction on an individual basis. Some of these performances were extremely inspiring, and others were completely frustrating.

Image/ A Woman Giving Herself a Tattoo with a Piece of VCR Wire and Ink from a Felt Pen

March 16, 1996, Warkworth, Ontario Continued...
Gail told me that two female inmates at Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women slashed their wrists a couple days after our show. I felt sick to my stomach when I heard about it. Staff at Warkworth Penitentiary were ridiculing Gail about the play because the warden ordered everyone to attend. Gail will monitor their impressions and feedback. Must phone Judith Lawrence (Family Violence Project Coordinator for the Pacific Region of the C.S.C.) about the women who slashed.

I was extremely anxious when I called Judith, but she advised me that it was not unusual for female inmates to slash-up when they were upset. She reassured me that the staff had been alerted to this possibility, so they had been on stand-by. As a result, intervention had been immediate in both cases.

"We had arranged to have psychologists on hand, during and following the show. Women were free to leave the show at any time; some did. Others left for a brief time, and returned once they had taken a little time to get themselves together. Some who left were visibly upset. A staff member, either a psychologist or caseworker, followed the women, and did some necessary intervention. Following the performance, a discussion was held in the rotunda area of the living units. This went very well, with positive feedback from the women who had attended. Some of those who had become very tearful and unable to return stated that if the play ever came back to the Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women that they would attend - that they recognized the importance of allowing the feelings to come out. Staff were very supportive and felt that a drama such as this was a first step for some of the women to deal with the sensitive issue of sexual abuse. The psychologists had some initial concerns that the play would be "too heavy" for the women. However, their comments to me following the performance were positive and they felt it had been a worthwhile experience for the women, and for staff." (Judith Lawrence, Family Violence Project Officer, Correctional Service of Canada, Pacific Region)

March 27, 1995, Fernie, British Columbia
Cranbrook last night. Warm people. Grateful. Aerobics class downstairs. Late start. Consensus we need a show like this for teens, and another for men. Today we reminded ourselves that the transitions

in the show represent some kind of collective healing/consciousness of all Survivors. Used more mud tonight -- need to bathe in it. Bertha found her cousin who had been taken away as a child by the Child Welfare authorities. It was a very moving -- touching reunion. Trains outside my window. Snowcapped mountains. Fresh, crisp air, sunshine. Bought a girl dress today, and girl shoes. It's spring. I'm coming alive again. Pheromones... Tonight we talked about sex and power -- they shouldn't mix. But I think they do sometimes. I need to think about it more.

Tanis: ***How could people laugh so long? He just called her a Choosis, must be his wife to call her a cunt.***[13]

I remember having a discussion in the van one day about the word cunt, and talking about women trying to reclaim it. Prior to that, I never used the word, and I'd be completely insulted if someone used it in my presence, or directed it at me. I was forced to think about why it was such a derogatory word, and eventually felt confident enough to challenge its common meaning and misuse. I used to say the word prick sometimes, and now I catch myself. I'm trying to unlearn using genital body parts as negative descriptors. It's really hard because I developed such a gutter mouth working with the R.C.M.P. and Corrections. Swear words are part of both subcultures' vocabularies for a variety of complex reasons, mostly to do with power.

March 27, 1995, Fernie, British Columbia Continued...

We also talked about girls losing their voice between the ages of 10 and 13. Realize that they can be controlled by boys through their sexuality. Sexual awakening and social roles disempower them. I have slowly been realizing that I lost part of my voice as I hit puberty, etc. This is connected to the point I was trying to make to my boyfriend about wanting to feel like I did before I was a teenager. More confident and in control. Less vulnerable and conformist. I want to recapture that feeling. That essence of truly feeling strong...

"This feeling of awkwardness was particularly evident for the men who attended. There were expressions of discomfort with the role that men play in the domination and subordination of women. A curious effect of the play, and perhaps an inadvertent one to be sure, was the concern regarding whether men had the 'right to speak' after such a portrayal of their role. Would any dialogue be seen as a justification and legitimation of the 'status quo'? Power, it seems, is often the negotiation of the right to speak and the right to remain silent, each, dependent on the situation, embodies a power

[13] Hurford et. al. 21.

relationship. Certainly some men were curious to know how men were perceived by women; if women, in general, had been silent (silenced) in relationships, which were destructive and damaging to the human spirit, and if the voices heard in the drama were representative. The women's responses, like the men's, varied significantly... For others, the drama was uncomfortable because it presented the intensity of human relationships, without the typical illusions of Romance, and other niceties of the human situation. There is little doubt that the performance had a powerful impact on the audience, and overall resulted in a heightened awareness of the issues of abuse." (Randall Wright, Vice President, Excalibur Learning Resource Centre, [C.S.C. Training], Red Deer, Alberta)

Colleen: I found the discussion about the word cunt to be quite refreshing. It had such an awful sound to me for a long time. Saying it out loud was quite a relief. I still, at that point, found the word to be totally disgusting. I didn't like using it, and I felt sort of dirty when people would called me that. The word cunt was really disgusting when it was used against me by men. I can't remember the whole conversation in the van, but I remember it was very heated, and everybody was taking a different stance. My sisters have been saying the word for years, and I use it all the time now. In fact it's a term of endearment one of my sisters uses for me. I call her dickhead. She calls me cunt. I've really noticed in the last few years that the word is used a lot more by women. It's not as disempowering any more. Before when I said cunt, I felt like I had just said the worst word on the face of the earth. That was like taboo, that word.

March 27, 1995, Fernie, British Columbia Continued...

One woman in the audience tonight said the most powerful part of the evening was seeing a group of women who trust and respect each other working together. She said it's like a female love. Ironic? No, I guess these things take hard work. It's a process, and a painful one at that.

"The Women's circle there (in Old Massett) spent a whole evening talking about the play in a very positive way and there has been talk about the women in Old Massett creating their own drama around abuse issues." (Michele Botel, Queen Charlotte Islands Women Society, B.C.)

Mercedes: ***I open my eyes just a little, and see him spit into his hand and rub it on his thing. He holds me down and thrusts his thing inside me... (screams and sobs, then starts to sing quietly to herself).***[14]

I remember a woman quietly telling the audience, in the post-performance discussion, that she had to lie to her husband in order to come to the show that night. No one said

[14] Ibid.

anything for a long time. Then another woman leaned out of her chair, made eye contact with the woman and said "I'm glad you found the courage to come".

March 29, 1995, Revelstoke, British Columbia

A really nice couple drove part way out of town with us today to show us Devil's Club. It is all over in the forest areas around Revelstoke. It was much larger that I had imagined. We cut a piece off and put it in the back of the van.

"A possible reason for the small turnout was a lot of people misunderstood the title. Comments I received were people figured it was devil worship... I am very sorry that we were unable to have more there, however we understand that due to the area, a lot of people still consider this topic taboo." (Jeanie Wiselka, Coordinator, Athabasca Victim Services, Alberta)

I couldn't count the number of times one of the cast members cut themselves on that piece of Devil's Club. During the set load-in or out, there was always someone cursing it, so we finally chucked it out. I suppose we could have turned it into a mobile and hung it from the rear view mirror in the van, but we were so negative and disconnected to it by that time that none of made the effort to save it. I regret it now. Devil's Club is still a powerful metaphor, for me, about the complexities of the journey.

March 30, 1997, Kamloops, British Columbia

This project is very tough to take because I was really invested and now it feels like a job in many respects. I'm struggling to reconnect with it and I'm not sure if that's possible without reconnecting with the people. And I'm not ready or prepared to do that, right now anyway.

"I am a survivor of sexual abuse of many different kinds, including bestiality. I live for the day other women who have suffered this kind of abuse, will be comfortable enough to openly discuss it. What the theatre group is doing is paving the way and I applaud you all... I still live in the rural community where I grew up and suffered my abuse. It is difficult not having many support people around me who can understand what I have been through, let alone be able to discuss sexual abuse. As my husband and I were arriving at the school where the play was held, I felt so good to be going into a room where everyone wanted to hear about sexual abuse... I would also ask you to thank the other women (artists) for their support and words of congratulations they shared with me that evening. I appreciate that so much." (Gloria, Survivor, Regina, Saskatchewan)

April 2, 1995, Chilliwack, British Columbia

Days off at the Holiday Inn. Very needed. I felt depleted. Exhausted. Really ready to give up. I couldn't help but feel that it really isn't worth it somehow. Starting to feel better. Saw "Shankshaw Redemption" this evening. The film talks about "hope". I realized tonight that I am

admitting to the fact that I need hope.

"Even for some of us who are fortunate enough to have never experienced family violence, watching the play made us realize it can happen to anyone. It also showed us there is healing and hope for every victim." (D.F. et. al. [Names Protected], Portage Correctional Institute for Women, Manitoba)

Image/ A Middle-Aged Native Man Holding Out His Hand to a Young White Woman

April 2, 1995, Chilliwack, British Columbia Continued...

A guy in Cranbrook looked me in the eyes after the show and said "You have Coyote. You can be strong." Binu says Coyotes mate for life. I keep looking at this photo of me with the Coyote. Trying to discover the completeness of the lesson. I miss everything about my childhood. I miss being held -- safe. But I know I can't go back -- realistically, and because of the knowledge I carry. Black and white polaroid. Where is the Coyote's mate? Doesn't have one I guess. I miss my teeth. I wish I wouldn't have let the dentist pull four of them out when I got braces. I have that same stupid crooked part in my hair. Almond eyes. I want to hug that Coyote like my sister's Samoan dog, Isis. Bury my fingers in its fur. Listen to it breathe. Knowing it could never fully succumb to my "love." Always aware of pending danger. Boundaries in place.

These prison walls have Spirits that talk to me
Echo secrets I don't want to hear
But I am safe
Behind this mask of mud
While angry tattooed muscle men are sobbing
Through their empty eyes
Ghosts among Us
Snakes of Truth are twisting in their brains[15]

Colleen: When we were in a hostile situation, and the audience was sucking all of our energy, I felt that the mud was a "Fuck You. I'm a Warrior and I'm going to get through this show no matter what you do to me." It was directed at the women in the cast as well, but mostly it was about the audiences who were out of hand, or venues where there was a lot of echoes, yelling, noise or shifting. It was like, "Okay, I'm going to put this mud on and it's going to hide me for a little while. It's going to hide every crack of my face, so you can't

[15] Hurford. "Seven Sisters and Me" song lyrics.

see every expression on my face, so I'm not that vulnerable to you."

April 3, 1995, Merrit, British Columbia

Matsqui prison show this afternoon. We had one of the same audience members from Bowden. He got transferred. Lucky him. He gets to see the show twice. He tried to give his poetry to Carole. He let me read it at Bowden and it was very dark and had a sense of isolation. (Duh?! He's in prison). He has turned his back on society -- lost his family. He is truly "alone." He's done eight years of a life sentence and he told Carole he doesn't want to return to society. He says he'll keep committing crimes so he will not get released. Very depressing. Yet I have spoken with the guy and I sense he is a bit more than troubled. We do not share the same reality. A guy in Mountain Institution told Colleen that he telephoned his parents in between the show and the panel discussion. He said he and his parents cried together for the first time since he was imprisoned two years ago for raping and murdering his girlfriend's mother. Said he understood what he did to her. What she must have felt like when she was struggling for air -- pulling at his pants for air -- gasping. A psychologist at Saskatchewan Penitentiary said these men blame the dead victims. Say she struggled so hard, she killed herself. She just died on him. Left him with this major problem (consequence). The mind is a powerful thing. Blocks out what could destroy you. The guy who spoke to Colleen found a shred of empathy and remorse. He acknowledged the pain he inflicted on another human being, and he acknowledged his own pain. He cried with his parents. They grieved together. He started his own healing process. He gave himself and his family, and ultimately society, a shred of hope.

"For myself, being a sex offender, the presentation truly helped me to gain some insight into the pain and confusion that I cause my victim. I hope that your theatre group will continue to create and present these types of performances for all people, including the offenders." (R.A.P. [Name protected], Mountain Institution, Agassiz, B.C.)

Colleen: I have some good memories of the disclosures, and obviously the high point for me was when the young man came out of denial at Mountain Institution. I can't really explain how I felt at that moment. It wasn't jubilation. It wasn't fear. It was just pity and sadness for this poor human being that's going to spend the rest of his life in jail for something that he shouldn't have done. For something that he's got to be responsible for.

April 3, 1995, Merrit, British Columbia Continued...

Tonight in Merrit, a guy looked me in the eyes and shook my hand while he thanked me from his heart. It was very touching and spiritual. He thanked me for my courage. I have been commended over and over again for my courage and my personal strength. That helps when I feel down. There seems to be a great deal of sexual abuse in rural communities. Where one perpetrator has impacted numerous victims. Tonight one woman said eighty women were assaulted by one man in a nearby community. One person came forward to report him and it snowballed into 80. Unbelievable huh? That is courage. The willingness to confront your perpetrator, your family, your community, to begin your healing process and set things right. You run the risk of being labelled a wingnut, losing your job, the respect of people in your community, your family. Shame. There is a great deal of shame in Canadian closets. It is going to come out in this decade Blake said. I think he's right. If it doesn't, there will continue to be violence in our homes, streets and workplaces.

"As to the concerns about the youth who were present: I appreciated your introduction to the play and the sensitivity shown. Response from the teens was very good. Both boys and girls said they got increased understanding of the issues. A Grade 11/12 Family Management Class attended as part of their course and followed up with discussion the next day in class. Again feed-back from the teacher was positive. While we have had concern from adults that the material was inappropriate for young teens, this was not the opinion of the teens. My fear in making parental supervision mandatory would be that many teens who could benefit would be unable to attend. We know that young teens are also at great risk of being abused (onset of puberty) and to deny them this kind of opportunity to learn in order to 'protect' them doesn't really make sense." (Peg Budd, Stopping the Violence Counsellor, Revelstoke, B.C.)

April 3, 1995, Merrit, British Columbia Continued...

So it appears that sexual harassment, and other types of harassment, of young girls is a critical issue. I've experienced this before. It coincides with the silencing of teen girls. Their voices are taken away from them. Sex is used as a weapon. Their sexuality is not respected. They are disempowered when they show visible signs of developing into young women. God I hate that terminology. It is so masculine. Anyway, sex and power are once again related. This is another evolving theme.

April 4, 1995, Lillooet, British Columbia

Windy, mountainous roads. Dangerous. Old West. Very scenic. Beautiful. Burgundy's and wheat's. Aqua rivers, cattle. Rustic. This

is a wonderful opportunity to see Canada. A number of teenage women from the community came up to me in the How-Dee Coffee Bar after the show to thank me. A couple of them held onto my hand. Asked if they could hug me. The show was very spiritual tonight. A long-haired man gave me a twenty dollar bill to support the show tonight. He was very supportive. Told me I inspired him. Told me not to give up. To keep working at this. I am finding renewed energy. Two women on the panel and a woman from C.B.C. were talking about the "Wise Woman" in each of us. I'm starting to understand and connect with this concept.

Mercedes: ***He laughs, and takes his fingers out of me and brings them up to my face. "See, they're wet. That means you want me."***[16]

Colleen: I realized how debilitating sexual abuse is for people. And I remember we were talking about somebody in a prison saying, "Oh you know I feel so bad about what I did." And then seeing the woman who was paralysed by her attacker. That's the one thing that got me, was seeing both sides of the spectrum in a community. Seeing people who've done what they've done, and then seeing the result.

April 5, 1995, Clearwater, British Columbia
Strippers in the hotel. Colleen and Althea walked in on them accidently. My room is right next to the tavern, and freezing cold. This hotel sucks!! The show was not really memorable tonight. Many teens in the audience. They don't stay for the discussions unless they have to.

"The guidance counsellor from the high schools informed me that the discussions in the classrooms about the show became more pointed and meaningful as time went on. A full 2 weeks after the show, the students were talking about the performance and its content more than ever. Clearly, the affects of this performance have rippled beyond the moment and into a shared experience for these students." (Sharon Kuropatwa, Program Director, Manitoba Research Centre on Family Violence and Violence Against Women)

April 6, 1995, Clearwater, British Columbia
5:15 a.m.
Just woke up from a bizarre dream. A man showed up at the Azimuth office looking for me, and he was pretty angry/psycho. The ***Running*** *cast were there -- specifically one of the women. The man asked if this*

[16] Hurford et. al. 21.

was the office, and who worked there. The woman said, "Only Deb works here, and she's outside," pointing to me behind a door, looking in at the man and feeling afraid. He came out after me and I tried to reason with him to no avail. The next thing I remember, we're near a cliff, like on the mountain roads, and these two beige fluffy dogs are there. One of them disappears, and the other is looking into my eyes. It recognizes my fear. Suddenly, the man is nearing the edge of the cliff -- we are struggling. I am trying to get him away from me. The dog has a coke can in its mouth. I feel tied up -- helpless. I look at the dog as if to ask it to push the man over the edge of the cliff. The dog looks at me and nudges him over the cliff. He falls, and I know he is dead. And then I wake up.

I'm wide awake. Can't sleep. Some drunk was staggering around outside my hotel room window. He threw up and wandered away. It's freezing in here. I feel like I'm getting that cold again despite my efforts to eat properly, take vitamins and get lots of rest.

April 6, 1995, McBride, British Columbia

Very warm audience tonight. The drama teacher from the local high school fixed my Peavey amplifier and the acoustics were fabulous. The songs sounded great tonight and I felt grounded for the first time, musically, on this tour. I'm starting to feel better about the show as a human being. Binu, Althea, Colleen and I went for a drink at the Powerhouse Pub with some of the show organizers. Met a man who teaches special education. He was very friendly. The community loved the show. Audience was very warm. I've been getting these intuitions -- knowing there is no power in an electrical outlet before I check it with my amp, knowing a candle is going to blow out in the middle of a show just moments before it does, thinking I'd need my journal in the middle of the night before I went to bed last night.

April 7, 1995, Prince George, British Columbia

Met Stephen Fearing tonight at the Other Art Cafe. His song about child abuse brought tears to my eyes. His music is way more powerful in concert than on the radio. He plays a Menzer Guitar with Pizo and Tak pickups. After the show I approached him and we talked gear for half an hour. He was very friendly -- joined us at our table for awhile afterward. Colleen is thrilled. I can't believe I asked him about his equipment. I wasn't nervous until I started speaking to him -- a bunch

of shit came pouring out of my mouth and I was overwhelmed with the gear info. There's way too much stuff to get. I got some good pointers though. He went to music school in Nelson, B.C. He's very intelligent also. Colleen was such a case. Just as we were leaving she snapped, right in front on him and said, "I can't believe I'm talking to Stephen Fearing!!" He just laughed while Binu and I tried to look cool. It was a fun night.

Mercedes: ***I open my eyes, beads of sweat have formed on his forehead. His mouth is open, and he grunts between breaths. Faster, faster he thrusts inside me, and then one long last groan.***[17]

April 7, 1995, Prince George, British Columbia Continued...
Last night I dreamt I had tiny worms - like little beige maggots, coming out of my anus. They were crawling all over my stomach and thighs, but I wasn't freaking out. I just kept methodically picking them up and rolling them back and forth in between my fingers and thumb until I had squished them to death.

Colleen: I am definitely a different person after this process. As an actor, it was the most difficult and tiring thing I have ever done. Trying to create a character from scratch, developing that character and bringing her to life. I wanted to give up so many times. It was just way too much effort. It felt like math in high school. "I'll never get this fucking formula!!"

April 10, 1995, Prince George, British Columbia
I am not happy with the tour. It is taking emotional energy every moment. The group dynamic is still pretty negative and unhealthy. This combination of women doesn't work. There are four really negative women. Two of them are Survivors. I cannot work with one of the women again in the future. I can't seem to resolve conflict with her. She is not open to it. I feel like she is sucking my power out of me. One of the Survivors is just plain angry as a person, and overtired. Another non-Survivor is needy, and a follower. She doesn't get half of the stuff that happens in the group dynamic, yet she jumps on every bandwagon. The last woman has panic attacks and projects feelings from the past onto present situations. She is "all" or nothing when it comes to healing.

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[17] Ibid. 22.

She is black and white when it comes to views and perspectives. All in all, I think I am okay. I'm coping okay.

Colleen: I think the project definitely made me a stronger person. Just in terms of the pure endurance of the three months that I went through. I know I can do anything now.

Image/ A Naked Woman Masturbating on the Floor in Front of a Mirror

Carole: I no longer need the approval of a man, which I always yearned for in the past. It has taken two years after **Running** to realize that. The project was the beginning of the changes I have made in my life. There are so many strong, independent women out there that can only be admired to their strength of character, and persistence in overcoming abuse and life in general.

"I liked the racial diversity of the actresses and diversity of their stories/life experiences, but I would have liked to see something about lesbian's lives, and/or homophobic abuse (and you don't need to be gay/lesbian to be a target)." (Conference Delegate, Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon)

The fact that there was not a lesbian character in the play became a criticism of the piece, particularly in large urban centres, where lesbians appeared to have a voice. I think, in future productions, it would be important to include a gay character who is struggling with all of the issues we were trying to unravel in our workshop process. Other themes which are related to surviving sex crimes, that audiences suggested be incorporated into the play include sexual harassment, systemic (re)victimization, substance abuse, suicide, spousal abuse and multiple personality disorder. Interestingly, I do not recall the marginalization of Althea's African Canadian character surfacing once during any of the 75 performances. I think everyone was so focused on the issues surrounding sex crimes that this issue fell through the cracks. Sadly, there were a number of other important women's issues in the play which were rarely discussed at any great length. Each one of them is as complex as sexual abuse/assault and commands its own spotlight.

April 11, 1995, Terrace, British Columbia

Denise Kenney's[18] home town. Bathtub water, yellow, like watered down pee. Bubbles looked like fresh snow sparkling in the sun. Like opal bobbles on a Christmas tree. The cast took my notes this morning and attempted to integrate them. The show was slow, but good. It was

[18] A local artist and friend of mine.

a beautiful theatre -- it makes such a difference. Something happens when they light those matches -- all the craziness disappears. Carole wants to leave the project at the end of May. I want to grab her and shake her and say why don't you get some help? I'm going to be sad when you leave this project. No matter how much I've hated you during this process, the play will never be the same again. Without you -- and this cast. But I can't because she won't listen. She told me she "wasn't mentally unstable or anything" when I suggested counselling, because it was so helpful for me. This project will never be the same again. It will never be what it was in the summer of 1994. We have all had to cope and change somehow to undertake this massive project. This painful journey.

Colleen: One of my saddest memories was in the last leg of the tour. We had just found out that Carole was leaving the project early, and we were going to have to cancel the last two weeks of the tour. I was feeling really helpless, and I think that was a real low point. Helpless and just hopeless. Like this is just not going to work. We've got to just give in to fate. She's leaving. It's over. No more fighting, you know? In a way, it was a relief when I was told that somebody was leaving. 'Cause I was angry, and tired.

Carole: I think two years after the fact, I now am able to even think about forgiveness. I realize that I'd always blamed myself, not anyone else, for taking advantage of me. At last I realize I was not to blame and I've forgiven myself. I'm sure the rest will follow. It's been a long process because I had a hard time recognizing what I was doing to myself.

April 11, 1995, Terrace, British Columbia Continued...

Last night and this morning I have been thinking a lot about Evelyn -- about her saying that the cast is abusive -- about me feeling like I can't remove myself from negative things because it's the lesser of two evils. Lose bookings and credibility with clients. I had to sacrifice me for another part of me. Evelyn has vicariously given me the strength and confidence to believe in myself during these past few weeks. I started visualizing myself in a yellow bubble as a boundary from the cast. I keep breathing, and reminding myself when it's "their stuff," not mine. I'm not buying into their power games. And I feel a lot better. Like I'm regaining my own power again.

"For the Centre, this event was a success in every way. It was reasonably attended, had a resounding affect on its audience, and reached out to people in a way lectures, books and workshops never could. Feelings emerged, empathy grew, and people were mobilized around the subject of sexual assault. This is nothing less than miraculous given the varying needs of our community involved in addressing issues of abuse. (Sharon Kuropatwa, Program Director, Manitoba Research Centre on Family Violence and Violence Against Women, University of Manitoba)

Colleen: I can't tell how the project changed me because I muddle it up with other things in my life, so I can't really pinpoint it. I've never been too scared of men, but I was pretty rattled when I met some of the people who were responsible for the abuse of women in our society. They're articulate, suave, charming, good looking, and yet they kill and rape women. And I guess I just look at men a little differently now. I guess I'm a little more probing. Like I don't necessarily accept what's on the surface, you know?

This house has broken windows
There's another house that's burned down
Across the street
A gutted truck on the lawn
Ramona's eyes are smiling at me
Her photocopied missing poster
Blowing in the breeze
Edith says "We all knew Her"
Linda says "She's flying with the Angels now"
And it's so cold...[19]

April 12, 1995, Smithers, British Columbia

Her name was Ramona -- born in 1976. She'd been missing for almost a year. Her body was found on Sunday. Identified today. I'm waiting for the full moon. Why can't I just start bleeding? I'm so sick of feeling like I'm going to start crying. Everybody in town knew her. There's going to be a funeral now. Their eyes are all so glassy. Stephen Fearing's hands are so nimble. They brush my soul. He understands silence -- anticipation -- holding back. I almost hit a beige dog with the van tonight. I slammed on the brakes. He paused and then ran clear. She was Indian. Missing for a year. Decomposing in a ditch in her white sweat shirt and jeans. And I've looked into her killer's eyes a thousand times behind those prison walls. Empty. Glassy eyes. Wounded people. Medicated. Don't know why they did it. Don't

[19] Hurford. "Seven Sisters and Me" song lyrics.

understand. Life is cheap. Expendable. I feel like I'm going to erupt into a massive wave of tears. Rocking. Weaving my body. Her missing sign on the bedroom windows of a house on the reserve -- the local gas station and store. In the windows of the shops on main street in Smithers, and the gas station windows for miles around. And Edith, our client, says we all knew her. There's going to be a funeral. And it'll be two more days 'til I start bleeding. And if I see one more clear cut mountain, I'm going to scream. I think my rainstick is contraband -- ripped from the rain forest. Swamps and naked birch trees. Two more days until the full moon. And already I'm crazy. Holding my breath.

Colleen: I still remember being totally exhausted at one point in B.C. -- a point of exhaustion that I had never felt before. I was cleaning out the candles before a show and this sense of sadness came over me that was so powerful. I let it in because I couldn't stop it. It's funny when you're tired, how your emotions soar through you. There's no control. Anyway, this sense of sadness made me cry. I left the venue, went outside into this huge field. It was setting sun, and it had just rained. Surrounded by mountains. I felt so connected to my emotion of sadness -- there was no censoring, there was no trying to be the tough Colleen, trying to control the cast, calm everyone down, make us feel normal. It was not normal.

One night, while we were touring, I had a dream that the Wolf approached me in a dark forest. It was night. I was naked and all alone, but I wasn't afraid. It wasn't going to hurt me. I started stroking its coat -- caressing it with my hands. I climbed on top of it, wrapped my arms and legs around it, and hugged it with all my might. Its fur was so soft against my naked body. I felt safe.

April 13, 1995, Prince Rupert, British Columbia

This is my favourite spot on the tour thus far. I feel at peace here. It is so serene. The hotel staff is down to earth. The rooms are fabulous, and I have a bay window with a window seat which overlooks the ocean. I feel like I am at home with my soul here. Like when I go to the South. South and West and North work for me, but not the East it seems. The prairies or the sea make me feel calm. Not the mountains per se -- yet they are majestic and truly beautiful. I don't need anything right now. I don't need anyone. I feel complete -- a work in progress as Ani DiFranco would say, but complete. It is 2:45 a.m., yet I am not tired. My soul is alive, yet calm. I wonder if there are any prairies by the sea. That is probably where I should settle -- ha! So many things are

becoming clear to me -- about me and my relationships with others. I feel like a part of my journey is coming to a close.

Image/ A Man Holding a Woman Face Down on a Car Seat While Another Man Rapes Her

There were numerous supportive men around us throughout this process. Educators who went out of their way to help us collect research. Artists who stayed up until the wee hours of the morning to help us dramaturge the script. Lovers (both male and female) who listened to us babble endlessly about the rehearsal process and audience members' reactions to the play, made our lunches, and held us while we cried. Men who tearfully disclosed their childhood abuse, or acknowledged perpetrating sex crimes. Men who respectfully told us that they felt they had no right to speak after the performances. Men who babysat their children so their partners could attend the play. Men who fixed our musical equipment, cleaned up theatres and school gymnasiums after the show, and helped us load our gear into the van. Men who wrote us letters supporting our work. Men who drummed Honour Songs for us in prisons. Men who said "I'm proud of you". Men who told us not to give up when they could see that we were tired.

April 15, 1995, Prince Rupert, British Columbia

One of the cast members and I had a thirteen-hour talk two nights ago. Too tired to write about it though. Spent the whole day trying to write a song about Ramona, the trip and the cast. It's haunting me. I have a feeling I will be in Prince Rupert again. Room 305 at the Crest Motor Hotel.

The winter snow is running
Clear cut mountains are crying
Autumn leaves and garbage in the chain link
Ramona's eyes are smiling at me
Her photocopied missing poster
Blowing circles around me
Ghosts among us
Dancing
Circles around me[20]

Image/ A Tiny Candle Flame Flickering in a Pool of Wax

May 12, 1995, Edmonton, Alberta

Bertha says something happens when she lights that match. Something

[20] Ibid.

she can't explain. It's like there are Spirits in the flames...

Colleen: What is engrained in my mind is the disclosure of a seventeen year-old boy at Mountain Institution. What an effect this show had on people. When I think back to what we were up against when we walked into different venues -- hostility, indifference, opposition to our being there. But we grabbed them every time and took them on the journey. For those who had been abused, it gave them a feeling of, "Oh God. I'm not alone." Angry, seemingly impenetrable people, feeling their loneliness out loud, sharing with us, trying to get better. What a strength that has given me. How proud I am to have been part of such a powerful healing tool.

May 12, 1995, Edmonton, Alberta Continued...
I don't want to forget the brown bath water from the run-off in Prince Rupert; the bad Spirits in the hotel in Drumheller; One of the Survivor's anger -- wrath -- venom -- revenge; the tears of seven sisters;

Carole: I have to say that, at the time, I didn't think that the work was worth the pain. But in all honesty, I can now say, "Yes. It was." I think with tenderness of some of the moments we shared. They'll be with me always. But I remember all the triumphant moments, all the tender times, the sharing times, and I think with fondness of all my fellow actors on this journey. I hope that they will be able to forgive my indiscretions because I have long since forgotten theirs. And they will all, always, have a special place in my heart.

May 12, 1995, Edmonton, Alberta Continued...
being crammed in a security booth while the guard dog searched the van at Saskatchewan Penitentiary; the strippers in Clearwater; Eating with mud-smeared faces at the Denny's at a Sandman Hotel somewhere; the crying man at the community show who needed to be held; the native girls in Chetwynd, and the best salmon salad sandwich I have ever had; the Irish hill-side in Lillooet; the bath of tears in Drumheller;

Colleen: My resentment manifested itself in all-encompassing forms for me. Especially on the tour. I wanted to enjoy the experience in the moment, not in retrospect. I can remember feelings vividly, and there is that harbouring of betrayal. Still, I wouldn't trade the experience of this project for anything in the world. I just wouldn't. Yet I would never do it again. With the same people, and the same process, I couldn't handle it, emotionally, again. It would just be too

hard for me. But I wouldn't trade the experience for the world. Nobody has had the experience I've had in theatre. And it's just incredible. I still tell people, to this day, some of the things that happened to me on that tour, and they're in awe.

May 12, 1995, Edmonton, Alberta Continued...
the bay window seat in the hotel in Prince Rupert; the overtly dyke inmates at Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women and Kingston Prison for Women, and the uptight female guards at Kingston;

Carole: I think **Running** should be remounted at some point. It has a strong message. But maybe it should be "Running Part II: The Aftermath." Part II could show the trials of "getting well" again. It would be nice to have the original cast back. I think we all learned a lot about relationships in this process. But if that's not possible, then I have no problems with someone else taking my part. I think another person would have new aspects to add.

May 12, 1995, Edmonton, Alberta Continued...
the standing ovation from the sex offenders at Warkworth prison; my broken reflection in the window of the rental van;

Colleen: I don't think the same group of women should be assembled in the future, despite their first right of refusal to perform the script. The women still haven't obviously dealt with a lot of their issues, which relates to why we didn't get along in the first place. It's like a bad relationship. You shouldn't do it again. You should move on. I think it would just be breeding disaster again because I think people would be bringing up old stuff. I know I haven't resolved everything with everybody. If I was to go into the process again with the same group of people, I'm sure I'd still be frightened that I'd start feeling negatively about a person again, and worried that I wouldn't know how to handle it. But the first right of refusal is tricky. I can't picture everyone going, "Yeah, sure. I'd like to work with the same group of people again!"

May 12, 1995, Edmonton, Alberta Continued...
paper thin hotel room walls -- people having noisy sex in the next room in Prince Rupert; Rogers Pass, the Coquhalla, Juliet Creek;

Colleen: Frankly the thought of someone else playing the character I conceived and nursed for a span of a year scares me somewhat. I feel a lot of ownership for her. If I wasn't invited to participate in a

remount of **Running Through The Devil's Club** I would feel like I was giving up a kid. I would feel really hurt because I nurtured this sucker for a year. This character is mine. But I know that Azimuth owns the rights, and if I'm not available and it is remounted, I'll have to deal with it. And I'll get over it. I know the company respects me. So if somebody else wanted to play the part and I couldn't do it, yeah. Go for it. It's a good play.

May 12, 1995, Edmonton, Alberta Continued...
the Parliament buildings in Regina; being delayed for two hours in the Calgary airport; great phone sex in Saskatoon -- my first experience; Binu and the empty wine bottle under her sheets; leaving my microphone in Terrace;

I stopped writing in my journal after this entry. It had been my friend. My source of solitude and serenity amidst the chaos. I think once I started having my own hotel room, I was content to sit with my thoughts, rather than write them down. I didn't have a need to purge or record. I regret it now, because I'm sure I've forgotten special moments.

May 12, 1995, Edmonton, Alberta Continued...
Devil's Club in Revelstoke; the street people in Victoria; the Elders in Bowden and North Vancouver; the gift of sage in Maple Creek; the Coyote painting in the lobby of the Crest Motor Hotel. To be honest, it's all a blur.

Image/ A Naked Woman Squatting Erect in an Open Field to Urinate

I think blood is about power. I remember Evelyn telling me about women who were tasting their menstrual blood. I guess it's a way of coming to know your own body/self. Re-claiming something special that has been debased. As I think about it now, I can hear the voices of the men and women in my life who would be repulsed by the concept of eating your own menstrual blood. Maybe it tastes terrible, but I think the concept is beautiful. And it would take courage. I've always wanted to make a finger painting with my menstrual blood. I think it's about releasing shame.

Vocalist:
(Speaking)
I wandered around aimlessly for years
Hiding, cowering, burning in my fear and my fire
Burrowing in my Silence
And then one day at the most inappropriate moment
Something snaps and everything changes
It's scary
You laugh from that low place
Until you can't help but cry

Accept your darkness and your dreams
Take hold of that Trickster
Run with the Rain
Scream at the Moon
Breathe
This is the journey -- the one that never ends
Searching for meaning
Looking into the flame
Becoming what you are
Some are afraid of the power -- paralysed
Lying in the ditch on the side of the road
Some prefer to walk
Some crawl
I choose to run...[21]

The tour concluded on May 14, 1995 at the Edmonton Public Library Theatre, two weeks before it was originally scheduled to end. The period of silence amongst the women in the cast has gradually lifted, however, **Running Through The Devil's Club** has remained dormant.

A month after the tour ended, I had my last dream about the Wolf. I was in my house -- searching for something. I opened a white closet door, and the carcass of a dead Wolf was lying on the floor. Its fur was matted with bright red blood. Its eyes were closed. I felt nothing. I closed the door, and kept searching.

[21] Hurford et. al. 45.

Chapter Three

Sacred Sight

I have seen two creeks
And a river and a stream
I have jumped in a puddle
In my bare feet
With the ocean calling out to me
Calling out to me...[1]

Naked, facing forward, standing here and now. On the edge of this body of water, I am alone. Coyote is behind me, in the trees. But my heartbeat is calm and steady. Heart beat Heart beat Silence. I am inbetween.

June 13, 1997, Edmonton, Alberta
A strange man knocked on my back door this evening and said that he grew up in my house. He was in his late thirties, and he had traces of a black eye and some serious scrapes on his right elbow. But he seemed nice enough -- sort of nervous, and he had a small black dog with him so I didn't feel threatened. The dog was really cute and friendly. He said he lived in the neighbourhood now, and after we talked for a few minutes I asked him if he wanted to look inside the house. He was thrilled. He started talking a mile a minute, flashing back to childhood stories as we walked from room to room. When we had gone through the main floor, I asked him if he wanted to see the basement. He suddenly got very quiet and seemed more nervous and embarrassed than he already was. He said that if he stayed any longer he'd start crying, and that he had good memories about growing up in this house, but he also had some bad ones. He said his mother had taken in borders, and one of them had been a "pervert." I knew in that moment that he had been sexually assaulted in my basement. After he left, I phoned my parents to debrief. I just needed to talk. They were a bit freaked out that I had let a strange man into my house -- like maybe he was scoping the place for a B and E, or he had been watching me or something. It didn't seem like that at the time. I hope I'm not a gullible fool, and I get murdered, raped or robbed.

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[1] Hurford. "Seven Sisters" song lyrics.

We live in a violent and destructive society. A world which controls, isolates, tricks, uses, debases and ignores us.[2] While working on **Running Through The Devil's Club** I discovered that, for the most part, people are simply trying to cope. We feel inadequate, lonely, helpless, and unimportant so we lash out. We grab onto any shred of power we can get in order to feel like we are in control. Most of the time, it's at the expense of someone else. Someone weaker. But ultimately, we pay a price.

> ***May 14, 1997, Edmonton, Alberta***
> *I never wanted to hurt anyone. I never wanted for anyone to be saddened or angered or bitter because of me. I never wanted to feel scapegoated and blamed. I wanted to do something important. I wanted to create a piece of theatre that would move artists and audience members into a state of transformation. I wanted to change things. But somehow, I watched a group of women open their pussing sores and drive their fingernails into the scabs. They stared at me with demonic eyes and clenched teeth, and said, "Look at what you're making me do to myself!" I hated them for that. I hated what this process had done to all of us.*

"It's been a long three months on the road for Azimuth Theatre and its production about rape. But the wait for Edmonton audiences has been worth it - **Running Through The Devil's Club** is powerful and innovative... **Running** is a brusk, often scorching look at rape and its consequences, put together by a company of eight women. Dramatic and heart-rending, it avoids the general pitfalls of such works. It emphasizes healing over hate and avoids the simplistic all-men-are-pigs attitude. The five gifted actors and three musicians present 80 stark moments that are an eye-opener for those unaware of the profound pain of rape and, perhaps, a therapy for those who know it only too well. The pointed anecdotes are rhythmically broken up with movement, candles, song and dance - given the intensity of the experience, it is a welcome space. If all this sounds a bit programmatic at the expense of the drama, it's not. It's all there - empathy, pain, anger, even tears... These stories are not new but the actors present them with such honesty and ferocity that we are drawn into their circle of pain. Azimuth specializes in theatre that uses research and performance art to examine critical issues in an effort to bring about positive change. In pursuing that goal, they haven't forgotten that theatre must do more than just proselytize. It must sway and move an audience. This powerful, thought-provoking evening does just that." (Colin MacLean, The Edmonton Sun, Friday, May 12, 1995)

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[2] "In the past decade, violence against women has been recognized as a gender issue. In June 1993, the World Conference on Human Rights recognized gender-based violence as incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person. In December 1993, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the Declaration on the elimination of Violence Against Women and, in June 1994, the Commission on Human Rights appointed the first Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women." van der Gaag. 18.

Running Through The Devil's Club was an attempt to expose and eradicate sexual violence against women by way of a sacred theatrical process of purification and celebration. It was supposed to be a gift -- to Survivors, to the artists, and to our society. The play was a magnificent spray of colour and light and tears and hope spiralling off the stage into the hearts of audience members and Survivors everywhere. It was a magical journey. But behind the scenes, in the wings and rental vans and hotel rooms of the performers, the process provoked a wrath of anguish, powerlessness and rage. Several of the artists began emanating the very behaviours they were trying to annihilate, and the group ultimately imploded. Perhaps it happened because we were women, because we were Survivors of all types of personal and cultural violence, because we did not have the skills to resolve conflict or cope with pain. Because abuse is imprinted in the cells of our bodies. Perhaps it was also because it is virtually impossible to create a healthy, non-hierarchical, non-destructive process to hold and nurture the artists, and the work, within the context of a violent society.

The cost of a thing is the amount of what I call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run.[3]

We were all damaged by the process. I need to name that clearly, and honour it. Research-based theatre about sex, power and violence is dangerous. The artists have to recreate the terror in order to validate and release it. And in order to cope with that excruciating pain, as well as the emotional strain of absorbing horrific stories of abuse over long periods of time, the artists unknowingly begin to mirror the culture's dysfunctions back onto themselves and each other. And because that irony is often too painful to acknowledge in the moment, we retreat further into denial or isolation.

While exploring the themes in this project, I have become much more sensitized to the meaning and use of language in our culture. For example, the term "rape" was removed from the Canadian Criminal Code in 1983, and replaced with the term sexual assault. At the same time, it became illegal for a man to rape his wife or commonlaw partner. There are now three levels of sexual assault which assist police officers and prosecutors to classify the severity of the act in question. Level one is the least severe, and level three usually involves multiple attackers or permanent injury to the victim. The benefit of the new terms is that they act as umbrellas for numerous sex crimes which did not previously fall under the definition of "penal penetration of the vagina." However, many of the people I have met in the victim assistance movement feel that the change in terminology confuses society's interpretation of the impact of sex crimes. The word rape conjures up images which everyone understands. Sexual assault level two is vague, and

[3] Henry David Thoreau: Cameron. 68.

therefore easily minimized, or dismissed.[4]

I learned that people in our culture deny what hurts them. They block out truth in exchange for bliss. There are still people in my world that blame the victims of sexual abuse. They say, "she was asking for it," "she shouldn't have been wearing that mini skirt," 'she shouldn't have been making out with him if she didn't want to have sex," "she should have known better." They say she should take responsibility for someone else's behaviour -- for someone else's lack of control. They say she should act the way our dysfunctional society wants her to act. I get angry when I hear these myths because I know, from speaking to hundreds of Survivors during this tour, that victims of sexual assault include six-month-old infants, little boys in residential schools and basements and peewee hockey arena dressing rooms, physically and mentally handicapped teenagers in extended care residences, elderly women in walkers, and scary-looking men in prisons, as well as attractive women. It's obvious that sex crimes are acts of violence -- they embody a mis-use of power and control. Yet people in our culture don't want to see that because it's too sickening to absorb. What do you do once you have that knowledge? How do you cope when you know that you do not have the power to change it? You don't cope. You shut down. So when the victim isn't an attractive woman, the perpetrator is identified as a "pervert;" a "sick" individual. Otherwise, the victim got what she asked for. She was being sexual. A tease.

I used to wear high heels and a lot of make-up, and I spent a great deal of energy on my hair and wardrobe. Working on the ***Running*** *project helped me see that I was playing the role of an attractive woman -- the "Babe" archetype. I went through a stage where I threw out most of my heels and quit shaving my bikini line, legs and underarms. I got a variety of reactions from people -- not all of them pleasant. But the one I remember the most was a female artist and educator who praised and "accepted" me for not shaving. She made it sound like women who shave their legs are selling out to the media's perception of "women." Her "feminist" rules were ultimately as controlling as the rules I was living with before I overhauled my wardrobe. So now I shave when I feel like it. And I'm very clear about the fact that it's definitely more probable that I'll be hit-on when I make-up. I'm experimenting with a variety of roles, and it's helping me understand who I really am -- my essence, as a "woman." I recognize that our society controls (female) sexuality. It's not as obvious as clitorectomies in Somalia, but it's just as devastating.*[5] *I'm trying to re-claim my sexuality without being labelled a "Harlot/Whore," "Virgin/Princess," or "Witch." I still haven't worn heels yet, but I keep*

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[4] For more information on the themes in this paragraph, contact Cpl. Walter Coles, Lethbridge R.C.M.P. or Keith Turton, Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre.

[5] For information on female circumcision see The Process of Changed Meanings: A Study of the Canadian Experience of Somali Women in The Kitchener-Waterloo Area... by A. La Ferne Clarke, Master of Social Work, .

a couple pairs in my closet, "just in case."

Our society sets us up for failure. We are socialized to be the prettiest, quickest, smartest, funniest, tallest, slimmest, sexiest, richest. We have to be at the top. So when we recognize that we are slipping, we pull everyone in sight down with us. I learned that women betray each other. The idea of all women being part of a "sisterhood" is a simplistic myth. Women are blindly fighting an individual battle against anyone who threatens them. It's human nature. Our Survival instinct. Women cannot acknowledge those moments of betrayal. They cannot acknowledge their role in the marginalization of other women, or the perpetuation of the myths which feed male dominance in our culture. It's too painful. So they shut down. They go shopping, they make-up, they overeat, they have babies and affairs, they clean their houses, and they smoke and cry and pop Prozac. They disconnect from everyone around them and, ultimately, themselves. They retreat further into denial as a means of coping with the harsh truth that we live in a violent society which perpetuates the abuse of the powerless, and women's hands are just as bloody.

I have come to learn that I am privileged. Because I am white -- even though I'm a Heinz 57; because my parents worked their way out of a blue collar existence to join the ranks of the middle class; because I am able-bodied, able-minded -- except when I worry that I'm not; because I am on the heterosexual end of the sexual orientation continuum; and because I have workaholic and over-achievement tendencies. But I've never really felt "privileged," until recently. I've always felt subordinate. To teachers, nuns, dentists, nurses, lawyers, policemen (there were no female police officers in my home town when I was growing up), politicians, and people who were older than me. I was taught to respect my elders, even if I "knew" they were "wrong." I've always felt pretty low in the food chain. And many of these community leaders still attempt to treat me as if I were subordinate, depending on how I'm dressed on that particular day.

"The inequities and reduced life choices encountered by women generally in our society, and experienced even more acutely by many federally sentenced women, have left these women little self esteem and little belief in their power to direct their lives. As a result, they feel dis-empowered, unable to help create or make choices, unable to help create a more rewarding, productive future, even if realistic choices are presented to them."[6]

Despite everything that happened to me and the other women who worked on **Running Through The Devil's Club**, I was empowered and inspired by the

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[6] Extracted from the "Empowerment" section of the C.S.C.'s **Guiding Statement of Principle** which states: "The Correctional Service of Canada with the support of communities, has the responsibility to create the environment that empowers federally sentenced women to make meaningful and responsible choices in order that they may live with dignity and respect. The five principles include empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, supportive environment and shared responsibility."

experience. There were drops of clarity, waves of quiet euphoria, and splashes of hope. Moments when faith in humanity was pulsing through my veins. Flashes when I felt like a channel for "God" -- that feeling I get when I look at birch trees and clouds, when I sit with my own Silence. But there were also moments when I wanted to catch the first Greyhound home and crawl under my sheets and hide. My eyes were opened with a crowbar. And I am still picking the dried blood off my face. I'm still struggling to see. To heal.

"... as theatre scholar, as potential drama teacher, and as woman my sense of aesthetic distance in **Running Through The Devil's Club** disappears as I am drawn into the dignified though degraded world of the sexual abuse survivor. As a spectator I am confronted with one community comprised of many communities. It is a community of women. It is a community of sexual abuse survivors. It is a community of dedicated theatre workers, who share a strong belief in the power of theatre to effect positive change."[7]

Sometimes it feels pointless, but I am attempting to create unforgettable theatre. Theatre which challenges artists' and audience members' assumptions, perceptions and choices. Theatre which is aesthetically innovative. I am pursuing the development of a collaborative theatrical methodology and aesthetic which engage artists intellectually, physically and spiritually, thus heightening their investment in the work and creating greater meaning, and relevancy for the work, for both artists and audience members. By integrating intercultural ritual, myth, archetype, live music, performer-developed soundscapes utilizing "found objects," dance, visual art and image explorations, I am attempting to facilitate a process where collaborators spiral through layers of experience which create meaning for them as "characters," as individuals, and as artists. A process which unites artist and community in a celebration of our humanness.

"Environment can be best understood in terms of a constellation of many types of environments... political, physical, financial, emotional/psychological and spiritual. A positive lifestyle can encourage the self-esteem, empowerment, dignity and respect for self and others so necessary to live a productive, meaningful life. It can only be created in a mutually supportive and respectful atmosphere."[8]

But I still struggle with the process. I struggle with the appropriateness of casting Survivors to play the roles of Survivors in a play which explores sex, power and violence; with women acting like they are healed. My methodology requires artists to disassemble their personal experiences and resurrect them in a sacred theatrical form. Art, and this process, cannot merely exist within the realm of personal exploration -- that is simply therapy. But the process, and the sharing of

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[7] Greenidge. 3.

[8] Extracted from the "Supportive Environment" section of the C.S.C.'s **Guiding Statement of Principle**.

the work, must be therapeutic. It must alter the artists as well as the audience members. The personal experience is the spark, the impetus for the journey. But the personal experience only achieves its divine meaning, its greater purpose, when it has been abstracted into a shared theatrical ritual. Clearly, this task demands considerable training, skill and experience. And the process must provide immense support, compassion, and time.

"All women need meaningful options which allow them to make responsible choices. These choices must relate to their needs and must make sense in terms of their past experiences, their culture, their morality, their spirituality, their abilities or skills and their future realities or possibilities. Meaningful and responsible choices can be provided only within a flexible environment which can accommodate the varied and ever changing needs of federally sentenced women."[9]

The artists in **Running Through The Devil's Club** managed to integrate the personal and the theatrical to varying degrees. Certainly, from the audience's point of view, they achieved that success. But those artists paid a price. A price which each one of us women in the cast ultimately paid. The artists who were truly successful at integrating the personal and the theatrical were able to move their work to a much deeper, more complicated level. They were consciously aware of their personal and professional boundaries at all times, and they made clear distinctions between their personal work and their artistic agenda. These women were constantly processing their personal issues, but they were not in therapy. They did not allow the process, the horrific stories, or their own (body) memories of shame and rage to swallow them up from the inside. These artists had extensive theatre training and skill, and they had the experience required to consistently make those critical boundary distinctions. They were working "intentionally."[10] It was a conscious decision. Perhaps these women had also simply processed their personal issues enough that they had the wellness and distance required to approach the work with this semblance of objectivity.

I think about the feeling-knowing of truth all the time because I am learning to trust it once and for all. If only it could be like a hoop that you jump through once, and then you move to the next phase of living-being-seeing. I could do that. I can jump through any hoop, once. But to integrate it into my being, my consciousness -- well that's another thing. Something like re-wiring my brain.

Personal experience is what makes this work sacred and meaningful to me. Sharing personal experiences is an act of healing because it normalizes other

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[9] Extracted from the "Meaningful and Responsible Choices" section of the C.S.C.'s **Guiding Statement of Principle.**

[10] See Living Intentionally: A Study of Nonviolent Men Who Witnessed Spousal Abuse in Childhood by H. Beth Balshaw.

people's experiences, and that's invaluable given that we live in a society which attempts to deny women's experiences -- it's "crazy-making." But getting lost in the personal journey is detrimental to both healing and the theatrical process. This work requires balance. If I were facilitating a project of this nature again, I would establish clearer initial boundaries for the group members. However, I can only determine if the artists are well enough to do the work once they have been engaged in the process -- because even they don't know. Flashbacks cannot be controlled. So if someone became overly triggered in future, I would gently advise the artist that I don't think they're ready to collaborate on a project of this nature. Undoubtably, some artists will ultimately discover that the work is simply too hard -- the price is too high. So leaders must anticipate that, and have contingency plans, and funds, in place.

Every person is unique. Transformation is always an individual process that uses the uniqueness of each human being and develops its own way of becoming. The timing is different for each person, the goals are varied, the vision is ultimately personal, and no part of the process of becoming is externally directed. Personal transformation cannot be governed by rules or format... Freewill is how we reach our ultimate potential.[11]

This brings up all kinds of questions for me about casting, which is problematic at the best of times, but particularly when working with themes of sex, power and violence, coupled with a representational range of actor ages and cultures. I have not yet met a native individual, for example, who has not lost an immediate family member to homicide, suicide or some other tragic death -- and this type of process triggers feelings of loss, powerlessness, guilt, shame and rage. The native culture's wounds are so deep and multifaceted that, in my experience as a director in a smaller professional theatre company, it's virtually impossible to access a trained and experienced native actor who has had the opportunity to achieve a level of healing that is required to successfully collaborate on a project of this nature.

"I believe that it is imperative that we move away from the traditional stance of maintaining silence on sexual violence. Nonetheless, I believe strongly that we ensure that in our zeal to break this silence we do not further traumatize survivors of this abuse. We must always be guided by the principle that we never open up what we are not able to adequately deal with and shut down." (Jan Heney, M.S.W., Contract Psychologist, Kingston Prison For Women)

The complexities and paradoxes are endless. Touring, in itself, is problematic. It's draining. You take people away from the comforts of their familiar surroundings, cram them into hotels and rental vans, feed them greasy food,

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[11] Sams. 379.

bombard them with dysfunction, and they become displaced. They lose control. Power struggles and personality conflicts are inevitable. The group dynamic becomes a food chain, and the alpha (fe)males emerge quickly and fight it out until the ranks are established. Given the intensity of touring and the mirrors of dysfunction, I would ensure that all cast members were required to attend weekly debrief sessions which were facilitated by an independent therapist in future projects of this nature. There are just too many issues and potential problems which arise in the process, and it is impossible for the artistic facilitator/director to simultaneously, and effectively, provide support to the artists, maintain the wellness of the group dynamic, and focus on the aesthetic of the play -- no matter what skills they bring to the process.

"This principle assumes that mutuality of respect is needed among offenders, among staff and between offenders and staff. This allows the women to gain the self respect and respect for others necessary to take responsibility for their futures. Respect is related to the four principles of the Aboriginal way of life: kindness, honesty, sharing and strength. Behaviour among offenders is strongly influenced by the way they are treated; if people are treated with respect and dignity they are more likely to act responsibly."[12]

I think the Survivors in this project rejected counselling because they were afraid they would be labelled "insane" -- the "Crazy Lady" is another female archetype. The other women rejected it because they feared they would have to take responsibility for their (dys)functional behaviour. On another level, I'm sure it was also about power. Because I was the leader, and the only one suggesting counselling.

Heels in the Sand, toes in the lake. Dried Mud in my hair and up my nose. Cracking off my skin in chunks. Pulling. Pinching. My skin is Screaming. Blood is running down the inside of my legs. But I am calm and steady. Heart beat

I struggle with my power. How do you facilitate a collaborative process which attempts to avoid a traditional hierarchical structure? I am collaborative by nature and, as a facilitator/director, I am very conscious of how decisions are made. I share that responsibility with the groups I work with, largely because I know it empowers people, and I'm inspired by other people's offerings. But ultimately, there comes a time in every process when I need to "pull rank" and override a group decision because it's not in the best interests of the majority of the group members or the show's aesthetic. This becomes confusing for everyone even when that parameter is articulated at the beginning of a process. But I realize that, as the person responsible for both the success of the project and the welfare of the group, I need to retain that level of control. It's the only way I can be

[12] Extracted from the "Respect and Dignity" section of the C.S.C.'s **Guiding Statement of Principle**.

accountable to the group, and to myself. As a result, I am forced to overtly acknowledge that I have that power. And in order to retain it, I must develop a clear boundary between myself and the rest of the group. The struggle, for me, continues to be about investing personally with the group and the work, so the experience is meaningful for me as an artist and woman, while maintaining a distance which allows me to be an effective and empowered leader.

My toes squish the Sand. My heels rise, one leg at a time. I step forward. Ripples. Mirrors. No sound.

My conclusions are not conclusive. They represent this particular moment in time. Today I know I would never facilitate this process in exactly the same way I did three years ago. And I know that this group of women will not collaborate on this project again. Trust was lost. And I suspect that the issues are still too close and overwhelming for some of the women, and the price too high for others. And that saddens me. Because I realize that something very special, very sacred, has died. *I watch the blurred faces, many faces, float in all Directions. They are laughing. Shimmering. Up. And down. I am strong.* I discovered that the individual can overcome almost anything. But the societal abuse is still there, breeding. *Behind me, imprints of circles. Wash away.* I haven't lost faith in the potential of theatre as a healing force, or the potential for a project of this nature to work. *Particles of Sand slowly rise and make the water murky.* So did we expose and eradicate sexual violence in our culture? Was our sacred act objectified? Debased? Denied? Was the price that we paid as artists, and as women, too high? (She smiles). The questions are too loaded. It's a matter of degrees, and frozen moments in time. *I step forward. Immerse.* This knowledge I gained, these truths, have been a critical rite of passage and a metaphorical tattoo. I can't give them back and go on with my life as if I never experienced them. They have seeped into my pores and stained me. Altered my cells. I am not the same person I was before **Running Through The Devil's Club**. And I will never be the same again. But the scars, and the knowledge that I carry, can be reason for me to shut down and deny my world. Or they can abstract me, rescue me. *My body drinks.* Purify Me. *The Water takes me, holds me. Becomes me.* Heal me. *And all I can hear is the sound* Sight is a Choice *of my own Heart* ***Beat***

"To foster the independence and self-reliance among federally sentenced women which allow them to take responsibility for their past, present and future actions, all levels of society must share responsibility. To make sound choices, women must be supported by a coordinated and comprehensive effort involving all elements in society. Governments at all levels, corrections workers, voluntary sector services, businesses, private sector services and community members generally must take responsibility as inter-related parts of society."[13]

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[13] Extracted from the "Shared Responsibility" section of the C.S.C.'s **Guiding Statement of Principle**.

The majority of human beings see a limited universe because of their belief systems. When we have not been taught that perception can be manipulated and expanded -- through the use of our imaginations -- we lose the concepts that allow us to become our visions.[14]

If *I* am
Quiet
Truth need
come to Me *I* just to ***Trust***
will
that *It is* already
Here
Within Me
Butterflies ***R e l e a s e d***
Waiting to be

G l i d e ***Clouds***
into the So *I* can ***S e e - B e l i e v e It***

C h a n g i n g

S h i m m e r i n g Everything

Like Confetti *Whispering*

Close your ***Eyes*** ***Sacred*** Sound

Sight *is a Choice*

Heart
Listen ***Beat***

See

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[14] Sams. 376.

Appendix A

Collaborators' Written Study Description

As you are aware, my name is Deborah Hurford and I am a Master of Arts student in the Department of Drama at the University of Alberta. As discussed in our recent telephone conversations, I am analyzing **Running Through The Devil's Club** in my thesis which is entitled **A Theatrical Exploration in Healing: Running Through The Devil's Club, A Women-Centred Drama About Surviving Sexual Abuse and Assault (1994-97).**

Through a spiralling compilation of journal fragments, interviews, letters, nightmares and scenes from the play, I will share a subjective, three-year retrospective account and analysis of this sacred women-centred theatre process. My findings will reveal the community's impressions of the project, as they comment on the marginalization of women in our culture, and the struggle we face as artists, and as women, to reclaim our power in a violent and dysfunctional society. Part truth, part contradiction, part question, part dream, this paper will explore the potential of theatre as a healing force.

By analyzing this process and the experiences of some of the individuals who were involved, I hope to gain greater clarity about the nature and effectiveness of theatre as a healing experience. This research will be of importance to those who are working in the fields of family violence, corrections, women studies and those who are collaborating on women-centred theatre projects. I also hope that the work is meaningful for everyone who has been touched by the **Running** project, or impacted by sexual violence.

As a member of the original **Running** collaboration team, I find it important to inform you that I am analyzing the project and that I intend to reveal, in a general sense, personal information about the cast members/collaborators such as, "Some of the women involved with the project were lesbians or Survivors of sexual abuse or assault." These disclosures are critical aspects of my analysis. For example, I explore whether the experience of being "Survivors" impacted those individuals' experiences in the **Running** project differently than it did for those who were not "Survivors." This information is of primary importance to family violence specialists, particularly those who are helping Survivors of sex crimes to heal, and theatre practitioners who are facilitating projects on themes of sex, violence and power. After providing all of you with early drafts of Chapters One and Two of the thesis, where these disclosures of personal information initially take place, and after discussing this issue with all of you, it appears that you would prefer that your names be utilized in the document, rather than being assigned code names, because of your investment in the project and your desire to be acknowledged in association with the production. I would like to assure you, as I have stated in our

telephone conversations, that if any questions or concerns arise for you at any time during the study, I would be more than happy to discuss them with you further and, if necessary, identify mutually acceptable alternatives, such as utilizing code names for the cast members/collaborators throughout the entire thesis document.

After I have completed the study, I would be happy to share my findings with you. So please inform me if you have a change of address or telephone number during the next six months.

I would also like to remind you that your authorization of the use of your name in this study, your participation in an interview, or your submission of personal reflections is completely voluntary. If you change your mind at any time during the study, please contact me so we can address your needs in a mutually satisfactory manner.

I look forward to further analyzing the **Running** process and sharing my findings with you.

Appendix B

Collaborators' Consent To Participate

As an artist who collaborated on the **Running Through The Devil's Club** project, I, _____ voluntarily consent to participate in a study entitled **A Theatrical Exploration in Healing: Running Through The Devil's Club: A Women-Centred Drama About Surviving Sexual Abuse and Assault** by Deborah Hurford, a graduate student in the Department of Drama, at the University of Alberta. The purpose of the study has been explained to me, and I understand that the researcher will reveal, in a general sense, personal information about me. In particular, **if applicable**, any reference to me being a lesbian or Survivor of sexual abuse or assault will be reported anonymously, unless I submit the disclosure, in writing, to the researcher for the purposes of it being included in the thesis document. I also understand that this, or any other information I submit, may or may not be utilized in the study, at the discretion of the researcher. Additionally, the researcher has provided me with a draft of Chapters One and Two of the thesis, in the form of a report entitled **Running Through The Devil's Club: Evaluation of the Process**, and I understand the nature and style of the document, as well as how the researcher discloses personal information about the cast members/collaborators. I am comfortable with these disclosures.

If applicable, I am also aware that the information collected from my interviews, or submissions of personal reflections, will be used by the researcher for the sole purposes of this study. I am aware that my name will be used in association with my interviews, or submissions of personal reflections, but that the researcher may eliminate elements of the interviews or personal refections, or assign code names, to protect the anonymity of third parties. I also understand that interview recordings and submissions of personal reflections will be stored in a secure place and then erased or destroyed accordingly when the thesis has been completed. I am aware that the information collected from the interviews, or submissions of personal reflections, will be used for the sole purposes of this study. I also understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I can opt out of it at any time.

Participant Name _____
Participant Signature _____
Date _____

I would like my name to appear in the study rather than being assigned a code name.
Participant Signature _____

Appendix C

Federally Sentenced Women Profile[1]

- Majority of federally sentenced women (66%) have children, for whom they are often solely responsible
- 80% of the women have histories characterized by sexual and/or physical abuse
- 69% suffered substance abuse problems at the time of their offence
- 87% of the women have limited education vocational skills and brief work histories
- 37% represent ethnic and cultural minorities of which 25% are Aboriginal
- Federally sentenced women ranging age from 19-74 with an average age of 33
- Federally sentenced women come from a wide range of backgrounds
- 87% are serving their first federal sentence, 50% have never before been in jail, and 36% have had no previous offenses
- 80% of offenders released from the Prison for Women (in Kingston, Ontario) in the last decade have never returned to prison

[1] Obtained from a hand-out I received at an Edmonton Prison For Women "Open House" in 1995.

Appendix D

Project Consultants

The following individuals in-serviced the artists on sexual abuse/assault issues:

Ed Allan, Youth Emergency Shelter
Dawn Bucharski, Edmonton Board of Health
Tom Gorman, Interpersonal and Family Skills
Evelyn S. Lupul, Therapist
Margaret Robinson, Bereavement Society of Alberta
Keith Turton, Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton
Arlene Twin, White Braid Society
Detective Geoff Williams, Edmonton Police Service
Shelley Williams, Edmonton Board of Health
Detective Rick Wilks, Edmonton Police Service
Anonymous Survivors of Sexual Abuse/Assault

The following individuals provided artistic feedback at various stages in the play development process:

Jonathan Christenson
Anya Fox
Mariko Heidelk
Shelley Kline
Brian Marler
Michelle Martinuk
Rob Moffatt
Sarah Neville
Anna Marie Okkerse
Mary Okkerse
Vanessa Rist
Annie Smith
Kevin Sutley
Randy White
Sian Williams

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